

S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

*By the late Rev. RICHARD WARNEFORD, A.M.
Vicar of St. Martin's, Coney-Street, and
Sub-Chanter of the Cathedral of St. Peter's in York.*

Prepared for the Press by himself, and faithfully published from his Manuscripts.

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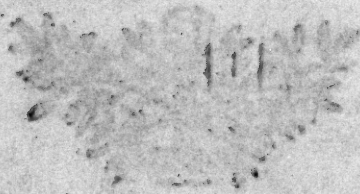
S E R M O N S

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

BY RICHARD WARMERD, A.M.

Author of "The Christian's Duty to the World," &c.

Prepared for the Press by the Rev. J. W. Warmerd, A.M.



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11



CONTENTS.

S E R M O N I.

Page 1.

JAMES i. 16, 17.

Do not err, my beloved Brethren. Every good Gift and every perfect Gift is from Above; and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.

S E R M O N II.

P. 15.

LUKE ii. 12, 13 14.

This shall be a Sign unto you, ye shall find the Babe wrapt in Swaddling Clothes, lying in a Manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the Heavenly Host praising GOD, and saying, Glory to GOD in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Goodwill towards Men.

S E R M O N III.

P. 29.

MATTHEW vii. 12.

Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, even so do unto them; for this is the Law, and the Prophets.

S E R-

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N IV.

Page 41.

EPHESIANS iv. 30.

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of GOD, whereby ye are sealed unto the Day of Redemption.

S E R M O N V.

P. 55.

HOSEA vi. 4.

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your Goodness is as a Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew it goeth away.

S E R M O N VI.

P. 67.

PSALM lxxiv. 10.

Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.

S E R M O N VII.

P. 79.

MATTHEW ii. 6.

And thou Bethlehem in the Land of Juda, art not the least among the Princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my People Israel.

S E R M O N VIII.

P. 91.

JEREMIAH xxxii. 40.

I will put my Fear in their Hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

S E R-

C O N T E N T S. xi.

S E R M O N IX.

Page 105.

PROVERBS xiv. 12.

*There is a Way which seemeth right unto a Man; but
the End thereof are the Ways of Death.*

S E R M O N X.

P. 119.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 9.

*Wherefore GOD also hath highly exalted him, and
given him a Name which is above every Name.*

S E R M O N XI.

P. 133.

EPHESIANS ii. 10.

*We are his Workmanship, created in CHRIST
JESUS unto good Works, which GOD hath
before ordain'd that we should walk in them.*

S E R M O N XII.

P. 145.

ROMANS xi. 33.

*O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and
Knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his
Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!*

S E R M O N XIII.

P. 157.

I TIMOTHY i. 5.

*The End of the Commandment is Charity out of a
pure Heart, and of a good Conscience, and of Faith
unfeigned.*

S E R-

xii C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N XIV.

Page 171.

PSALM xxxix. 5.

*Verily every Man, at his best State, is altogether
Vanity.*

S E R M O N XV.

P. 185.

PSALM cxliv. 4.

*Man is like to Vanity, his Days are as a Shadow that
passeth away.*

S E R M O N XVI.

P. 199.

PSALM xciv. 11.

*The LORD knoweth the Thoughts of Man, that
they are Vanity.*

S E R M O N XVII.

P. 213.

PSALM lxxi. 6.

By thee have I been holden up from the Womb.

S E R M O N XVIII.

P. 227.

JEREMIAH xxiv. 7.

*I will give them an Heart to know me, that I am the
LORD, and they shall be my People, and I will be
their GOD.*

S E R M O N XIX.

P. 241.

JAMES i. 22.

*But be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only,
deceiving your own selves.*

S E R-

C O N T E N T S. xiii

S E R M O N XX.

Page 255.

GALATIANS i. ii.

The Gospel which was preached of me, is not after Man: For I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST.

S E R M O N XXI.

P. 267.

I CORINTHIANS iii. 22.

Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the World, or Life, or Death, or Things present, or Things to come; all are yours; and ye are CHRIST's; and CHRIST is GOD's.

S E R M O N XXII.

P. 283.

ACTS ii. 4.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance.

S E R M O N XXIII.

P. 297.

JAMES iv. 4.

Know ye not that the Friendship of the World is Enmity with GOD? Whosoever therefore will be a Friend to the World, is the Enemy of GOD.

S E R M O N XXIV.

P. 311.

I TIMOTHY vi. 17.

Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in

xiv C O N T E N T S.

*in the living GOD, who giveth us richly all Things
to enjoy.*

S E R M O N XXV.

Page 325.

I CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

And they that use this World, as not abusing it.

S E R M O N XXVI.

P. 337.

LUKE xvi. 9.

*Make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Un-
righteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive
you into everlasting Habitations.*

S E R M O N XXVII.

P. 351.

LUKE xvii. 32.

Remember Lot's Wife.

S E R M O N XXVIII.

P. 365.

ISAIAH lxiii. 1.

*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed Gar-
ments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his
Apparel, travelling in the Greatness of his Strength?
I that speak in Righteousness; mighty to save.*

S E R M O N XXIX.

P. 379.

LAMENTATIONS i. 12.

*Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? Behold and see
if there be any Sorrow like unto my Sorrow, where-
with the LORD hath afflicted me in the Day of his
fierce Anger.*

S E R-

C O N T E N T S. xv

S E R M O N XXX.

P. 393.

JOHN ii. 19.

*JESUS answered and said unto them, Destroy this
Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up.*

SER.



CONTENTS
SERMON XXV

P. 393

John 11: 10.
Jesus answered and said unto him, Saying this
I know, but I will wait till he say.

SER.

24 OCT 62





S E R M O N I.

JAMES i. 16, 17.

Do not err, my beloved Brethren. Every good Gift and every perfect Gift is from Above; and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.



THE Manner in which the Apostle here puts this Matter, gives us great Room to suspect, that those to whom he was speaking were highly guilty of this Mistake; and by his softening his Rebuke, with calling them at the same Time his beloved Brethren, strongly insinuates, that it was a favourite, as well as common Error; and that his asserting otherwise was a ready Way to provoke their Indignation. But however the Case might stand with them, I'm well assured that our dearly beloved Brethren, to whom we are at this Day to address our Advice, are far gone in the Error: Insomuch that we have not only almost excluded God the Holy Ghost from being the Author and Giver of all our Grace and Goodness, if we have any; God the Son, from any Necessity of what he did and suffered in our

Nature, and for our Example, to obtain the Redemption from Sin and Death; but even God the Father from being the immediate working Power in his own Creation.

We have learned so much Natural Philosophy as to be able, without the Help of God, to account for the whole Proceeding of the outward Elementary World; and, by the Help only of Natural, or Second Causes, can derive our Light and Heat from the Sun; our Rains from the Clouds; which join'd, regularly fetch out the hidden Virtues of the Earth lodg'd there according to establish'd Laws; and so, orderly working together, produce all the Riches of the Vegetable World.

Our Moral Philosophy gives us as good a Lift in getting rid of the Necessity of a painful Redemption; seeing the Light of Reason directs us into the Knowledge of all Social Duties; and that nothing further can be justly required with regard to Practice, than our acting up to the best of our Abilities: And as for the supernatural Endowments of Grace, they are agreed on all Hands to be ceased, together with all other miraculous Powers; and that they who now pretend, or hope to receive any such Influence, are either Hypocrites, to be punish'd and abhorr'd, or else such as are indispos'd in their Heads, or bodily Constitutions, and are Objects of Pity; no otherwise curable than by Medicine, join'd with proper Exercise and entertaining Diverſion. And thus is the whole Trinity of God learnedly disposed of.

Something indeed of a First Cause, upon which to hang the Chain of our Rational Deductions, must be

be admitted ; but for any immediate Agency, That seems little wanted. The Relations of Things are so happily established, by the fix'd and unalterable Laws of Nature, that all Things will go on now very well of Themselves ; and by the Management of the Ruling Creature Man, for whose Use all was at first created out of nothing, his Work here below may be made to answer this Design, without his more immediate Presence. This seems to be the Sum of our modern Divinity, as well as Philosophy ; and, by the Guidance of which, GOD in Unity, as well as Trinity, is render'd no better than a Stand-by, if not wholly discarded.

I shall endeavour, in my following Discourse, to expose all these Opinions as an Heap of most desperate Errors ; as contrary to good Sense and sound Scripture Doctrine ; in every respect false and dangerous ; and at the same Time labour to re-establish the good old Belief the Apostle, in the Text, stands up, and earnestly contends, for, *That every good and every perfect Thing is a Gift from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.* A Confutation of those who think otherwise, I shall endeavour to bring under these three following Heads ; shewing,

I. That every good, as well as every perfect, Thing is a Gift from above ; and so neither of ourselves nor from beneath.

II. That they are not scattered promiscuously ; but descend, and that designedly, regularly, and wisely, as from a Father ; the Father of Lights too. And,

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III:

III. That though they may appear as Good and Evil to us; yet, as they descend from Him who is invariably the same without Shadow of Turning, they are as unchangeably Good as GOD himself.

First, then, I am to shew that every Thing, whether good or perfect, is a Gift from above; and not from ourselves, or any independent Powers here below.

Now, the Language of the World is here utterly against me; it talks all of Habits; virtuous and good Habits; but the new Tongue, with which the Holy Ghost instructs Men to speak, calls all of this Kind, Gift and Grace. Look to what you have in Possession, says the Spirit of the World; covet earnestly the best Gifts, says the Heavenly Spirit: And all that speak otherwise are of *Galilee*, and their Speech bewrayeth them. Hear one of them, whom the Gospel has signalized: *Soul, thou hast much Goods; eat, drink, and be merry; and hear with it the Language of an Apostle, What hast thou, that thou didst not receive.* You may know what Spirit's Child each is, by his respective Dialect. *Esau*, he said, *I have enough, my Brother*; this is the Language of profane *Edom*; but his Brother *Jacob* makes Answer to *Whose are these Doves, and Children that I meet? They are the Goods that GOD hath given me.—I have Power to crucify, and I have Power to release thee*; this is *Pilate's* Voice; but what saith the Answer of GOD unto him? *Thou couldst have none in either Case, except it were given thee from Above.*

Let us not think these two Words, Good and Perfect, each set forth with the Addition, every, to be an
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 useless

useless Tautology: They have a material Difference; and agree only in this, that they are both of them Gifts from Above; they are good, or perfect, according to their several Degrees: For as all our Sins are not equally heinous, tho' all great Evils, so our Gifts, though all good, yet are not all alike perfect; neither one, or the other, are of the same constant Size. St. *Matthew's* Talent is more than St. *Luke's* Pound; *Cæsar's* Penny, than the Widow's two Mites; tho' all good Coin in their several Values. Gifts may be good, tho' given but for a Season; they may perish in the Using, as do all transitory Things, and be of that Sort *Job* spake of, when he said, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*: But the perfect Gift is perpetual, and of Kind with *Mary's* Choice, such as should not be taken away from her. One refers to Things that are seen, which are temporal; and the other to Things which are not seen, but yet are eternal; so that Good and Perfect differ, tho' both are Gifts from God. To prevent Error in our conceiving of this Matter, I shall endeavour to mark the Distinction as strongly as may be, for several doctrinal Points depend upon it; and upon this we ground our Right to ask those Things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the Body as the Soul.

We know that the Law is good, saith the Apostle; and at the same Time asserts, that it maketh nothing perfect; Grace therefore is superadded to carry it into Execution, and thereby give it the Perfection it wanted. This Distinction, well observed, will account for several Scripture Expressions that want to be thus cleared up; such as St. *John's* calling, what another Apostle terms the Root of Evil, even worldly Wealth,

this World's Goods : Nay, the very Bread, and the Fish, and the Egg, we give our Children, are called, by CHRIST, good Gifts ; and *David* terms that Portion the evil World fill their Bellies withall, GOD's hid Treasure ; but still pronounces that the LORD himself shall be the Portion of his Inheritance ; and that this is the fair Lot GOD himself will maintain. And thus, when that which is perfect is come to our Hand, then that which is good in Part only may be spared, or done away,

To be in any Degree made Partakers of a Divine Nature, is perfect as well as good ; but all that is short of it, tho' it may be good, is not the Perfection for which the Father has made us, the Son redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost sanctifies us ; for every perfect Gift from above is of an enduring Substance, and which will make us endure happy to all Eternity. *Whilst others are done away, these remain*, saith the Apostle ; such are the living and growing Gifts of Faith in the Understanding ; Hope in the Desire ; and Charity, or Love, in the Will ; which last kindles all the Affections into an heavenly Flame, and directs the Actions that flow from them, so as to render Glory to GOD, and do good Works unto Men ; and it is therefore called the Bond of Perfectness. A State of Grace is the Perfection of this Life ; and to grow in Grace and increase the good Talents GOD has given, by trading with the same, is the whole Duty of Man. Travellers we are in this World ; and it is the Perfection of a Traveller to draw still nearer and nearer to his Journey's End. To walk with CHRIST To-day and To-morrow, that on the third Day we may be perfected.

Now

Now as we are commanded by St. *Paul* to covet earnestly the best or most perfect Gifts; so are we here directed by St. *James* to consider every Good, tho' of an inferior Make, as a Gift from above. Do not therefore err in this Point; both we receive, and both we should so worthily use, as to be truly thankful for all.

An Heathen, and one that passed with the World too for a wise Man, could say, That to be rich, he would pray to *Hercules*; but to become virtuous, he would be beholden to none but himself. We many of us seem to reverse this Behaviour, and yet retain the Error. We can, some of us, allow God to be the Author and Giver of Divine and Heavenly Things; but for the less Matters, such as earthly Benefits, these we ascribe commonly to our own Prudence and Management; applying, in a very bad Sense, *David's* Declaration, *Thou art my God, but my Goods are nothing unto thee.* This is a great Error; for every good as well as perfect Gift is from above. *What hast thou that thou didst not receive*, holds true in every Thing we possess, small as well as great. 'Tis God that works all our Works in us, and the very Thoughts that set them a-going. The self-same God that form'd the most glorious Angel in Heaven, has form'd the poorest Worm that creeps about the Surface of the Earth, and equally directs their Motions; and 'tis even absurd in us to speak of great or little Power necessary for the Creation or Direction of either; for every Creature that has Life is equally a Marvel in our Sight, that bespeaks an infinite and almighty Power for its Production, and has alike sprung from him who alone hath Life in himself. So the same God that gives us the Kingdom of Hea-
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ven and Life everlasting, gives too every Bit of Bread, and Drop of Water, that keeps this poor Life on Foot a few Days longer. And, agreeable to this Doctrine, he puts us to acknowledge both in one and the same Address to him; directing us to pray and sue for the Kingdom of Heaven, and our daily Bread, in the same Breath.

In these little Instances we learn well of whom all is held, and from whom all is received; nor should we in any wise despise the Day of small Things. He that begins with thanking GOD for the Bread he eats, shall, by-and-by, know to thank him for the Bread indeed that endureth to everlasting Life. We must be taught to see GOD in the Small, or we shall never see him in the Great; in the good first, and then in the perfect Gift. *There be many that say, Who will shew us any Good?* St. James here gives a satisfactory Answer to this Question, by shewing how to turn every Thing into Good. Consider only with him whence every Thing comes, and then all becomes good to the Godly, as descending from him from whom nothing but Good can come. And to him that can thus convert all into Good, by joining the Will of GOD to every Dispensation, shall be given that perfect Gift that joins Man's Nature to the Creator's Will: Whereby he is secured from all Evil, and the very Dread or Apprehension of any such Matter; and shall in due Time be put in Possession of all that GOD has prepared for those that love him; and which is more than has ever entered into the Heart of Man to conceive. But,

Secondly, These Gifts, of what Sort soever, are not scattered promiscuously, but descend from above; and

and that designedly, regularly, and wisely, as from a Father, even the Father of Lights, whose Gifts they are: And to conceive otherwise is as gross an Error as to think they are from ourselves, or arise from beneath, from Powers lodged in Nature, and fitted for such orderly Productions. They descend; which is a voluntary Motion, and carries with it an Idea of Will and Design: All Casualty, or Chance, is utterly excluded. And to prevent the Mistake Mankind is very apt to run into, of ascribing what befalls them, as they wrongly term it, to Luck, Chance, or Fortune, the Scriptures are ever choice in the Manner of expressing this Matter. GOD is ever represented as giving; he casts it not down to be scrambled for at all Adventures; he opens his Hand wide, and great Benefits we have received at his Hands; but nothing slips through his Fingers by Improvidence; his Bosom is open to all that appear in the Image of his Son, in whom he is well pleased; but nothing drops out of it, beside his Will and Intention. He sent his Son into the World, and the Son and the Father together send the Comforter: And of his own Will he begets us to a lively Hope and Fitness to receive the Benefit of these and all other his divine and heavenly Donations. All Possibility of Chance or Fortune are excluded out of the Creation, before that GOD unto whom all his Works were known before the World began.

But to what Purpose, may it be said, does the Apostle here say, *all descends from the Father of Lights?* He had just before call'd him GOD: *If any,* says he, *lack Wisdom, let him ask of GOD;* and would it not have been more apposite, when he was speaking of his Gifts, to term him the Author and Giver of all

all good Things? But only observe how naturally this somewhat unusual Term grows out of the preceding Word—from above. And lest, when we cast up our Eyes at this News of Gifts descending from thence, we should let our short Sight terminate in the Lights, greater or less, that shine there in the outward Heavens; and which, by their Influence, Aspects, or Conjunctions, determine Good or Evil to the Sons of Men; to snatch us, I say, from being intangled in this common Error of starry Influence, he purposely chuses to call God, in this Place, *the Father of Lights*. They are his Issue, and obedient to his Call; they are made for our Use, and are a Part of his Gifts. Nay, the Angels that are above them are but ministring Spirits to them that are Heirs of Salvation: And, indeed, when speaking of Gifts, the Thought of Light must press forward upon the Mind; 'twas the first he bestowed upon the new World, and by which, indeed, it became a Creation; 'twas the first Thing he pronounced to be good, and all other Things borrow their Perfection from it; and there is such an Affinity between Light and Goodness, that they are in Scripture scarce ever separated.

All that is good comes to the Light for its Manifestation; nay, God himself is called Light, as well as the Father of it; his Son, our Saviour, Light of Lights; the true Light, that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World; and the Influence of the Holy Ghost, the Light of the Holy Spirit; and all Mankind who have received his Gift, are term'd shining Lights in the World, and the Children of it.

And

And GOD is here styled *the Father of Lights*, in the Plural Number, because the Issues of it are so various. There's one Light of the Sun, and another of the Moon, and yet another of the Stars; and among the Stars one differeth from another in Glory. Yet all from him; he is the Father of them all.

And as there are many Darknecesses in Nature; such as the Darkness of our Senses, together with the intellectual Blindness of the inner Man; the Darkness of the Understanding by Ignorance and Error; the Darkness of the Heart and Will, by Envy and Malice; the Darkness of Adversity in this World, that has some Light in it, and the Blackness of Darkness, or the utter Darkness of the World to come, that has no Spark of Light in it; where nothing's to be heard or seen, but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth; to all these there are as many Lights opposed. That of Multitudes of Mercies; plenteous Redemption; superabundant Grace; that the Father of Lights may swallow up in Glory all the sad Influences of the Prince of Darkness.

There is a Light of Nature, which *Solomon* calls *the Candle of the LORD*; which, though imperfect, is yet good; though lame, yet, like *Mephibosheth*, of Royal Extraction; and for rebelling against which, all who have not CHRIST suffer Condemnation. There is likewise the Light of the Law: The Law is Light, and appointed for a Lantern unto our Feet. The Light too of Prophecy, well to be heeded, though shining in a dark Place: But there is, above all, the wonderful Light of the Gospel; which, like the perfect Day, swallows up all the rest.

This

This is the Light of Grace which God hath commanded to shine out of Darknes, and thereby manifests the hidden Deity to be in all Things.

When this true Light shines in the Deep of our Hearts, it chases away all Darknes even in this Life, and renders us meet to receive the Light of Glory hereafter; which is call'd the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, and which is now sown for the Righteous, and shall hereafter make them shine as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father.

All these Emanations descend from God, the Fountain and Father of them, as naturally as Beams issue from the Sun. They flow kindly and readily from his very Nature and Property, as from their genuine Father; in whom is no Darknes at all, and from whom therefore nothing but Light and Goodness can proceed. I have now spoken to every Word in the Text, except these last—*with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning*; which I shall now,

In the *third* and *last* Place, just touch upon; and with it conclude.

If then, to carry on the Metaphor, the Sun bring Winter upon the Earth, by withdrawing his friendly Presence; and a thick Cloud has Power, even when over our Heads, to take him quite out of our Sight: If the Moon too, the second Ruler of the Night, has her Wain, and so often becomes quite dark, leaving, as it were, the Earth without a Guide; and sometimes neither Sun nor Stars for many Days appear;
may

may we not dread lest the Father of them may, in like Manner, become uncertain; withdraw his Presence, so that the Sun of Righteousness rise not upon us?

To obviate this Apprehension, which naturally arises when we go about to compare, or set forth the Creator, by Allusions taken from the Creature, the Apostle here assures us, that with God this is nothing so. *I am, that I am*, admits of no Change, or Shadow of Turning. We may indeed forsake God, as we may die; but still all live unto him, nor can he forsake us. He is ever present with all his Works, or they could have no Being: 'Tis only we that discern him not. 'Tis the foul Vapours that arise from Sin, which obscure our Sun; or the Shadow of the dark Earth that brings on the Night upon our Souls: *The true Light still shineth, tho' the Darknefs comprehend it not*: 'Tis we change, God changes not. Man walks in his own vain Shadow, and stands in his own Light; but God's Ways are all everlasting Truth, nor can he deny himself. As these Considerations are strong Consolation to the Righteous, so to the Wicked they are dreadful: For if any Thing be wrong in Man, Man must turn to mend it; for God is unchangeable, nor is there any Shadow of Hope or Fear of his Turning.

Turn us then, O LORD GOD Almighty! O Father of Lights, draw us to behold thy Light in all thy Gifts, whether good or perfect: O, gracious Redeemer, kill and crucify in us the Darknefs of Nature that hides it from us: And, O glorious Spirit,
give

give us that right Understanding in all Things, that
we may evermore rejoyce in thy holy Comfort. To
this Holy and Ever-blessed Trinity, three Persons;
but one GOD, be for ever ascribed, &c.

Amen:



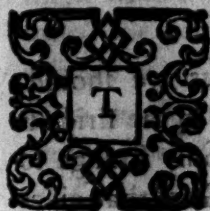
S E R.



S E R M O N . II.

LUKE ii. 12, 13, 14.

This shall be a Sign unto you, ye shall find the Babe wrapt in Swaddling Clothes, lying in a Manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the Heavenly Host praising GOD, and saying, Glory to GOD in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Goodwill towards Men.



THESE Words are in themselves, at the very first Hearing, so plainly applicable to the present Solemnity, that it would be mere Waste of Time to go about, by Comment or Paraphrase, to make them more so. And they carry likewise, in their very Face, so obvious a Meaning, in their primary Shape, of a Fact historically related, that it would be equally needless to endeavour, in this Respect, farther to explain them. I shall therefore, without any Preface or Introduction, address myself immediately to open some deeper Understanding, and more useful Sense, therein contained, than at their first Appearance, to many Hearers, they may readily convey. And this shall be attempted under these three Views, by shewing,

I. How

I. How his being a Babe, wrapt in Swaddling Clothes, and lying in a Manger, should be a Sign to us of the Birth of a Saviour.

II. The close Connexion between this Mark of earthly Meanness, and this honourable Declaration of it from Heaven; for suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the heavenly Host praising GOD for the same. And,

III. The Result of the whole, which is the Subject of their Song; *Glory to GOD in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

First, then, we are to consider how the Babe's being to be found in a Stable, and lying swaddled in a Manger, should be a Sign to us of the Birth of a Saviour.

Now, if by *Sign* we understand, as we should, a Wonder, this will answer the Notion in the strictest Sense of the Word, as appearing not only strange to us, but every Way unworthy of the GOD that gives it; *whose Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, and whose Works are all Wonders*: For no Flesh alive could of himself have dream'd of looking for the Son of GOD in so unlikely a Place, under such ghastly Circumstances; and none perhaps, but poor Shepherds, would have believed such a Sign, though pointed out to them by the Message of an Angel. Yet there he must be looked for by all that ever hope to find him in Truth, how contrary soever it be to our natural Notion and Apprehension of the Fitness of Things; for herein the
critical

critical Point, the inward Essence, the very Life of the Gospel Redemption, is significantly comprized and held forth, as I shall strive to make appear. That CHRIST the LORD, the Desire of all Nations, the Light of the *Gentiles*, and the Glory of *Israel*, should be cramm'd up in the Corner of a Stable, for want of Room in an Inn, in the Day of his Nativity, in the Hour of his Manifestation in the Flesh, this goes hard with Mankind to credit; but that this Circumstance of Meanness should be farther made the Sign of his future Glory, this quite passes all human Comprehension. It had need indeed to have been published by an Angel, and an Host of heavenly Witnesses, for no lower Messengers could have been sufficient to gain Credit to such unlikely and extravagant Reports; which if any else had delivered, this Notice of his Birth would likely have met with the same Reception the News of his Resurrection did, when related by the Women who first saw him, and passed for no better than an idle Tale. *Who hath believed our Report, saith the Evangelical Prophet, when this Matter was before him, since we call to see, and consider, Things that have not been before heard, or told?*

And indeed if we admit any Conference with Flesh and Blood in this Matter, and lay together in the Scales of worldly Wisdom, the Sign, and the Thing signified, such Thoughts will arise in our Hearts, as that a less disparaging Mark might have done rather better. We would all fain find CHRIST, but had rather be directed to look for him in some more graceful and becoming Place. In this Point all Mankind are by Nature *Jews*; we all are for the Appearance

of the *Messias*; but then we would have him come like himself, or more truly like ourselves, (for there it is the Matter sticks so heavily) with some Shew of State, at least as far as Decency and good Manners require. What a forbidding Sign is here notified! ye shall find the Babe wrapt in Clouts, lying in the Stable Manger of a Country Inn! What Sort of Company can be expected to visit in so hideous an Apartment; or wait in a Stable to pay Compliments of Congratulation on the Birth of a Prince, not only the Son of *David*, but one born King of the *Jews*? O, gracious God! thy Counsels are more profound than the great Deep, nor can we fathom them, unless thou give us both Line and Plummets. Were it not so, could we take upon us to judge Angels, or prescribe Modes of good Manners to the Heavenly Host! We shall see our Folly, the Moment the Light from thence begins but to dawn in our Hearts; and understand that a fitter Sign could not have been given, nor the End of his coming into the World more aptly distinguished, than by such a Birth and in such a Place. He comes to visit us in great Humility, and the Sign should be accordingly. Indeed had CHRIST come in his Excellency, in Power and Glory, that had been no Sign at all; no more than the Sun in the Firmament shining in its full Strength. A Sign is something contrary to the usual Course of Nature.

As therefore the Sun eclipsed, and wrapt in Sackcloth, is a Sign to the Earth; so the Sun of Righteousness, thus darkened and emptied of every seeming Excellency, is the true Mark of Salvation, and points full at the Nativity of a Redeemer; But especially to the Poor, to whom this Kind of Notice was first sent,

and to whom it primarily belongs; for had he been better born, and in what we call higher Life, these poor Shepherds would scarce have found Admission, as they now did first to his Presence. 'Twas a welcome Sign to them however, and should be to every higher Degree and Rank of Men; for had he been born of an higher Order, or in a more noble Manner, what Thanks had been due for giving him an honourable Reception? But if we meet and embrace him in all his Meanness, this is acceptable with God; and it may be supposed 'twas this very Thing obtained for the Thief on the Cross so ready a Passage into Paradise, that he could see GOD in CHRIST when in a yet more ignominious Condition. But in Truth, and when rightly considered, we shall perceive that such a Beginning of Life holds the most exact Proportion, according to the Rules of Symetry, with the Middle and the End of it: And well is He born in a Stable, who is to live without a Place to lay his Head in, and at length die upon a Tree; the Scandal of the Manger being a proper Preparative for the Scandal of the Cross. His Life's all of a Piece; thus it behoved CHRIST to suffer, and thus it behoved him to be born: For, coming in this Sort, he the more openly manifests both the Will and the Power of GOD; who delights to raise the most glorious Superstructures upon the lowest, and, to us, the most abject Foundations. And this has been the Method of the Almighty in all his Manifestations upon Earth. From a Bundle of floating Bulrushes on the Brink of the Nile, he draws out a Babe, who forms and gives Laws to a mighty Nation, his chosen People *Israel*; and to publish that Gospel, which is the Power of GOD to Salvation to the Ends of the Earth, he sends another

Babe, under Circumstances of a still meaner Aspect, to be brought forth in a Stable, and to be lodged in a Manger. If ever, in his Humility, his Judgment was exalted; if his Power were ever made perfect in Weakness; or the Foolishness of God proved to be wiser than Men, it was in this Instance; and therefore the fittest Sign to manifest to the World, that the Hand of the Almighty was there.

But, be the Sign as it may, the Thing signified is what ought most to concern us; and if it do but bring us to CHRIST, it will not be complained of. Were there some earthly Treasure hid in a Stable, or under the Dunghill of it, I know no one so delicate, but they would rake there to obtain it. Nor is any one worthy of CHRIST, in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, who would not go any Lengths to find him. Observe, the Angels of Heaven were not ashamed of this homely Sign, and there can be no Reason therefore why any Creature upon Earth should be so.

Those who desire to find a Saviour without a Sign to direct them to him, must even wait for the *Jews Messias*; for the Gospel knows none, nor can give none, but this. But it may be perversly said, What is all this to us? These Things are at an End; the Stable and the Manger are no more. Nevertheless this was written for those that come after; and the Humility, which is the Substance of the whole, remains still, with which we are not only to be swaddled, but to be cloathed. And as St. Paul tells us of *Abel*, that *he being dead yet speaketh*; so we may say of CHRIST, though gone into Heaven, that he yet preaches

preaches from his Cradle, and cries from the Manger, at this Hour,—Learn of me, for I am humble in my Birth, humble in my Life, humble in my Death. This is therefore an everlasting Sign; and CHRIST is never to be found by us, or in us, by any other: And this Sign shall certainly follow to all them that believe; nor will GOD ever acknowledge us for his adopted Children by any other Mark. For as CHRIST's Birth was known by no other Sign, so the Christians new Birth can be no otherwise ascertained: For as Faith is the Virtue proper for his Incarnation, so is Humility equally necessary to give us a Part in the Blessings of his Nativity; and all those who have not joined Humility to their Faith, have not yet come so far as to be Babes in CHRIST; and when then shall they arrive to the Measure of the Stature of his full Age?

But again: As this is the only Sign in our Favour, so the Want of it will be no less a certain Sign against us, for every Word of GOD is as a two-edged Sword; and if, with its friendly Wounds, it humble us not on the one Side, it will as certainly, with those of an Adversary, cut deep into Human Pride with the other.

What indeed was it but the Pride of Man, aiming to be as Gods, that brought the Son of GOD thus low? What was it but their monstrous Attempt to rob GOD of his Honour, that thus spoiled CHRIST of his Glory; What was it but their being puff'd up with Vanity, that emptied him of his inherent Greatness? What was it but their haughty comparing themselves with the Almighty, that made the blessed JESUS, in his Birth, Company for the Beasts?

The sole End of CHRIST's coming into the World was to recover lost Man; to give into his Nature what was wanting, and destroy out of it what was wrong. And this could not be effected but by a Treatment directly contrary to that which occasioned the fatal Disorder: By Pride Man perishes, and by Humility alone can he be recover'd. Yet so perversly bent are Mankind on Ruin, that by none is this Sign so spoken against as by the Proud; to them it sounds most harsh; to them it feels most desperately irksome. Yet was it their peculiar Offence that occasioned all this; nor can their desperate Malady admit of any other Cure.

But, in a Word, whosoever stumbles at CHRIST, on account of the Meanness and Poverty of his Birth; or likes him the less for being afterwards rejected, despised, and spit upon, shall perish for the Lack of a Redeemer, there being no other Name given under Heaven, whereby we can be saved. The true Scripture Tokens of the Reprobate are full upon him; that is, he wants Witness, has not the Signs of Salvation about him.—

But see now, as we purposed to shew

In the *second* Place, the close Connexion between this Mark of earthly Meanness, and the honourable Declaration of it from Heaven; *for suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the Heavenly Host praising GOD for the same.*

And this is indeed the constant Measure and Method of all Evangelical Proceeding. Whosoever they are obliged to mention ought that may offend,

or

or grieve the Children of Men, they are sure to wipe it away with close-attending Benefit, and over-balance the Grievance with some Matter of high and blessed Consequence. The other three Evangelists have indeed omitted this whole Transaction; but *St. Luke*, who may properly be styled the Psalmist of the New Testament, sings away the Disgrace he has recorded, with an Hymn of Praise for the same, worthy to be chanted by the Choir of Angels, in whose Mouths he places it. Hence we may conclude that the Sign of Humility, whereby CHRIST is to be found, received and put on, is a Matter of the greatest Weight and highest Honour with God, seeing he is to be so exalted in it with Praise, by those who best know to do his Will; by a full Choir of Angels; by a Multitude of the Heavenly Host; who, quick as Fire, suddenly address themselves to the blessed Office. And herein was fulfilled what the Apostle says of the Son of God, when thus brought into the World, *Let all the Angels of GOD worship him.* Worship him for this astonishing Instance of Lowliness, in condescending to be introduced, in so unbeseeming a Manner, into his own Creation; insomuch as that *when he came thus unto his own, his own received him not.*

For Angels to praise God is no new Thing, from the Beginning it was their Occupation; but to be collected in a mighty Body to praise him for a Child's being born in a Stable, this is a new Thing, and requires a new Song both in Heaven and in Earth: For, as *Job* tells us, they sang together at the Creation, so now they meet again on a still greater Occasion, for the bettering and restoring of all Things by the Consequences of this single Act. They then sang to
the

the Son of GOD for the Birth of the World, but now for the Birth of him by whom the World was made; who was thus born amongst his Creatures to give them a new and better Birth than Creation did; to make all that are born with him into Humility and Lowliness of Nature, Sons of GOD, and Heirs of everlasting Life. Nor is there a Moment's Pause between the one and the other; but the Glory to GOD immediately follows the humble Sign, which shews how intimate the Connexion, how closely they are united, and depend upon each other: So that what appears to us Below ignominious, is pronounced on High to be glorious; what seems to Men little and mean, is in the Sight of Angels great and marvellous; and what looks to the Eye of worldly Wisdom as weak and childish, is before the King of Saints seen to be just and true; and, as such, in every Respect, is suddenly celebrated by the whole Heavenly Host. And oh that we might, on Earth, be permitted to join them in their Hymn of Praise; to send back, at least, some faint Eccho to their Harmony, if we are not yet worthy, with Spirit and Understanding, to learn the full Sweetness of their sacred Song! Some of the Substance of which I shall now, in the

Third and last Place, in plain Speaking, try to lay before you. The Words of it are, Glory to GOD in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men. The deepest and most excellent Meaning of which is—That the Glory to GOD in the Highest, or the highest Glory to GOD the Father in Heaven, is due for sending CHRIST, the Prince of Peace, and the Holy Spirit, who is the Good-will or essential Love, that makes both one, to join together

ther in Blessedness Earth and Heaven, which had been, by the Sin of Man, unhappily disjoined. For this Purpose was CHRIST born; for this End came he into the World. Nor can Glory be rightly and truly rendered to GOD, till the Thoughts of our Hearts be cleansed by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit; neither can Man ever worthily magnify his Holy Name, or perfectly love him, but through CHRIST our LORD. Nor indeed was either Peace or Good-will amongst Men established on any lasting Foundation, till he who is the Way to GOD, the Truth of Love, and the Life of Good-will, came to give each of them a Place in our Nature, by joining the Godhead and Manhood, in the strictest Bond of Union, into one Person in himself. This is the Sum of the Christian Religion; nor can any but Christians understand, or learn to sing this Song, which so compendiously and so completely holds it forth.

CHRIST came to break down the Middle Wall of Partition that *Moses* had set up between *Jew* and *Gentile*, making them both as one in himself. He came to give such Peace on Earth, as this World can neither give nor take away; hereby fulfilling *Jacob's* Ladder Dream, by opening a free Intercourse between Earth and Heaven. He came to give us Peace with ourselves, and with each other; Peace of Conscience, which is Rest to our Souls. He came to give us a Portion of *Simeon's* Peace; departing Peace, to quit the World with Comfort, with Desire. He came not only to give Good-will, a Kind of Peace, but something more; a Gift peculiar to Man, and which, rightly understood, exalts his Nature to the highest Pitch it can sustain; 'tis what gives Death to corrupt Nature, and brings forth a new Life to GOD. Nor is the
Glory

Glory to God, and Peace and Good-will towards Men, ever to be disjoined, for they couple High and Low, Heaven and Earth, God and Man; nor can God be praised on high, till Peace upon Earth be restored. It makes indeed a Kind of Heaven upon Earth, and brings down a Name, together with a Blessing on the Heads of those that make Peace, *they shall be called the Children of GOD.* All Blessing is, indeed, the Issue of Good-will towards us, and all Consolation the Work of Good-will in us. The willing Mind still making the Acceptance, whether of *Mary's*—what she could—in *Oil*; or the *Widow's* All—in *Mites*.

If this were but well weighed, it would soon bring Men out of Conceit with Merits and Works, and I know not what, of their own contriving and executing, to gain Acceptance; and make them look diligently to their Hearts, to see whether they were right in the Sight of God; whether they were right humble, having learned this Day's Doctrine from the Stable and the Manger; it being the humble Man, who knows he receives all from Grace and Favour, that gives out truly the Glory that reaches to God in the Highest.

And, indeed, if ever Men on Earth do rise above themselves, and approach in any Sort to a Similitude with those blessed Spirits above; it is then when, in Peace and Good-will, they lift up their Hearts to God, and join with Angels and Arch-Angels, and all the Company of Heaven, in lauding and praising his Holy Name for this inestimable Instance of his Love, in thus sending amongst them, in such great Humili-

ty, his dear Son, our Ever-blessed and only **LORD** and Saviour. To thee, therefore, O blessed *Yefu!* together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c.

Amen.

S E R M O N III.

Matthew vi. 1-18.

Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, even so do unto them; for this is the Law, and the Prophets.



THE LAW of God, which appeared to us as a perfect Guide for all our Duties, our Thoughts, and Doings, is now, O Lord, and Thou dost bring it to a Principle inherent in our Nature, we had more than about it, so little Purpose, and more Mistakes made concerning the Understanding, Use, and Application, than perhaps any other Declaration of Duty throughout the whole written Word of God. For how commonly is it neglected in the Practice of those who, never the less, call themselves Christians? For what kind of Influence it has upon the Soul, in giving Direction to the

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or affecting, now and then, a Sort of Haste for Abuse, we cannot deny. The common Beliefs, views of Mankind, and the World, and the sensible Difference that is made at this Day between the enriched and Neighbouring Countries, does but too plainly declare.



S E R M O N III.

MATTHEW vii. 12.

*Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you,
even so do unto them; for this is the Law, and the
Prophets.*

 HIS great Rule of Action, here called the Law and the Prophets, and appealed to as a sufficient Direction for all our Behaviour and Dealings betwixt Man and Man; and that arising from a Principle inherent in our Nature, has had more said about it, to little Purpose, and more Mistakes made concerning the Understanding, Use, and Application, than perhaps any other Declaration of Duty throughout the whole written Word of GOD. For how shamefully is it neglected in the Practice of those who, nevertheless, call themselves Christians? For what little Influence it has had amongst us, besides giving Occasion for much Talk, or affording, now and then, a Sort of Handle for Abuse, we can call scriptural; the common Behaviour of Mankind towards each other, and the unreasonable Difference most People make at this Day between their own and their Neighbours Concernments, does but too plainly declare.

I shall

I shall therefore, without any farther Preface, endeavour, in my Manner of handling this trite Subject, to set it in a more just and consistent Light than it has commonly been placed in, and that under these three obvious Divisions; shewing,

I. The Objections that have been made to the Universality of its Obligation, together with the Mistakes from whence these Objections spring.

II. The natural Justice that enforces, and the Delight that arises in the moral Sense, from the conscientious Observance of it. And,

III. Our base and palpable Deviations, from this first Law of Nature, in a few interesting and well-chosen Instances. And,

First, for the Objections that have been made to the Universality of its Obligation, and the Mistakes from whence these Objections spring.

Now, amidst the various Opinions this Precept's being found in the Gospel has produced, one aims at proving that the Rule itself is too large; and, consequently, in many Cases, not expedient; and, in others, not possible to be strictly followed.

If we make our own Desires and Expectations the Measure of our Behaviour to our Neighbours, we shall act foolishly and extravagantly towards them, inasmuch as our Desires and Expectations are often glaringly both foolish and extravagant. By the Way, did it but sincerely convince us of this, the End for which our Saviour here produced it, is, I believe,

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in a great Measure answered. It appearing to me not so much a Rule of good Behaviour towards others, as a just and tart Reprehension of our senseless Partiality in Favour of ourselves, and Disregard of our Neighbour, when the Feelings of both are the same; and this from an Appeal to Nature, and a Law engraven upon our Hearts.

But to go on with the Objection.—

Should a Magistrate, when a Criminal is brought trembling before him, and, in the Bitterness of his Soul, intreating for Mercy, conduct his Sentence according to this Rule, he must pardon and let him go; for, without all peradventure, he, in the other's Circumstances, would be glad to receive such merciful Treatment: And yet we find him obliged, by Laws both Human and Divine, to proceed in a quite different Manner. For it is most certain that were a Criminal's Desires to be consulted, and made the Measure of his Punishment by a strict Application of this Rule, there could be no such Thing in the World as the public Administration of Justice.

Now, to stifle the Force of this Objection, we are told that Passion, Self-love, and private Interest are not here to be consulted; but only what unbiassed, and an impartial Regard to the Dictates of Reason and public Utility direct, is to be the sole Measure of our Acting; forgetting that this utterly destroys the Force of the Rule, considered as an Appeal to Nature, and the steady Sensations of all Mankind. If Reason be to shape the Rule, Reason becomes its Master; and, instead of being an infallible Guide, it becomes a mere passive Pupil to ourselves.

Ano-

Another Objection made to the Universality of this Rule, set forth in the Term *Whatsoever*, is, that it is too narrow; as it makes no Kind of Provision for any Christian-like Behaviour; knows nothing of the Cross, nor that capital Doctrine of it, the returning Good for Evil. For here it seems a due Regard is to be had, in the Application of this Rule, to the Difference of Relationship we stand in towards each other; the Circumstance, Quality, Age, Sex, and Condition of the Person we have to do withall is to be nicely weighed, before we can make a judicious Application of it. Childish Desires, we are told, are never to be consulted, nor the Motions and Feelings of Self-love to be any way regarded; but only the Comments that cool Reason and unbiass'd Prudence make upon it, are to be the true Measure of our Conduct: And whatsoever these shall allow us to expect and insist upon from others, it is our Duty to mete out the same to all that demand it of us.

Here again this great and capital Rule is degraded, and put under the Tutelage of that very Reason it was purposely advanced to control, and thereby made of none Effect. For the most Tyrannous, Proud, Pitiless, and Covetous; the worst and basest of Men amongst us, seem to desire no greater Latitude than to act by this Rule, provided they are allowed to have but the circumstancing of it in their own Hands. But one Blunder ever begets another: Let but what every Man is pleased to call Reason be made the Supreme Judge of his Actions, and no Law in Nature, or Precept of the Gospel, will be sufficient to restrain him: But, God be blessed, he hath never so far forsaken his People, as to leave them to the sole Direction of so weak and so blind a Guide. He hath written some
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of his Laws in our Hearts; and, by a Kind of instinctive Pressure, constrained us, in some Measure, to the Observance of them. Of that Kind is this now under Consideration: And 'tis from our not giving due Attention to this Distinction, that all our Mistakes about it spring. Observe, our Saviour never says it is the Gospel; and why then should we? But only that it is the Sum of the Law, which makes nothing perfect, whether delivered by *Moses* or the Prophets; and whose legal Righteousness must be exceeded by every one who hopes so much as to enter into the Kingdom of God: And we greatly err when we strain it and ourselves, with an Endeavour to give it so extravagant a Comprehension: And therefore our LORD, upon pronouncing these Words—*For this is the Law and the Prophets*, immediately raises his Thoughts, and, in a more exalted Strain, cries out—*Strive to enter in at the strait Gate, for many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able!* Strive to enter so far into the Spirit of Self-denial and Self-abasement, as cheerfully to give up all Right, and suffer the Loss of all Things, Life itself, rather than go back from following the Steps of a crucified Redeemer. Doing as we would be done by, will never awaken in us any such-like divine Disposition: For herein is no Love of Enemies, no turning the Cheek to the Smiter, no giving up the Coat to him that forcibly despoils us of our Cloak, included; or indeed any of those sublime and heavenly Submissions in Meekness, which are of the very Essence of Christianity; and to the constant Practice of which, nothing less than a Birth from above can possibly exalt us.

Thus much for the Objections, and the Mistake upon which they are grounded; it being no uncommon

mon Thing first to misunderstand, and then to raise Difficulties upon our own Blunders. This Precept was not given as the whole Gospel; for no Law, however excellent, can give Life, but was produced as a severe Reprimand for our falling below even the Dictates of our Nature, and acting dishonestly towards each other in Contradiction to our own Principles. It is levell'd as Matter of Reproach against those Religious Pretenders, who are found wanting when weigh'd in the Balances of Nature, rather than as a Rule of Life to those who have put on CHRIST; something that leaves us inexcusable before GOD and Man, we ourselves, in the mean while, being Judges.

In this Light it becomes an excellent Monitor to all those who have no other Law, but that of Nature, for their Guide; and a probable Means of leading them through Repentance into Newness of Life; as will appear, now we come,

Secondly, to shew the natural Justice that enforces it, and the Delight that arises in the moral Sense, from the conscientious Observance of it.

'Tis indeed a Law, to whose Obligation we cannot help giving our Assent; and 'tis with much Industry and studied Palliation that we can bring ourselves coolly to act against it. It wants no more Proof than a self-evident Proposition; having its Power felt within us, the very Instant we afford it our Attention. All our Notions of Justice and Mercy grow out of this inward Sensibility; and we must even strip off our Nature before we can wholly disengage from this Bond, or entirely cast away this Cord

Cord from us. Those who never heard of a written Revelation, have Notice of the Justice of doing as they would be done by, born within themselves. They who never read *Moses's* Tables of Stone, (which, by the Way, are only a lively Transcript from natural Justice) had yet this Law written on the fleshy Tables of the Heart; and never wanted, from the same Ground, a severe Accuser, or comforting Witness, according to their respective Behaviour towards it: A conscientious Witness from within ever accusing, or excusing. Here it is we feel the Obligation of making our own Inclinations and Desires the Rule of dealing with others of the like Sensibility, our own Wants and Infirmities the Standard of Benevolence and Pity.

Here we see how Nature, unprovoked, starts with Abhorrence at Injustice; and is even pained, when forced upon Spectacles of Cruelty and Ill-will. This proceeds from an inward Sensibility that, by Nature, we are all the same; and by a sympathetic Application of Self-love, the only valuable Fruit it produces, we are home-taught useful Lessons of Justice and Compassion. What Pity it is that Man, so finely constituted, should be so entirely and basely corrupted, insomuch that we have left us but just enough Goodness to speculate upon, and render us inexcusable for rejecting its Light! We can lye and slander; we can cheat and oppress; we can bite and devour each other, in spite of these Notices from Nature, or even the strongest Strugglings of the Spirit of Grace. Nevertheless Justice, as well as Mercy, is a Debt to our Nature; and, if not honestly discharged, will make a sad Account at the Judgment of the Great Day, having

ving no Excuse to make to the Condition of the Obligation. Nature calls upon us to do Justice, and no less loudly does she cry for the Exercise of Mercy; a Temper so essential to our very Constitution, that it has been baptized, as it were, into our Name, and is called, emphatically, *Humanity*. We are, indeed, invited to the Exercise of it by all the Powers of Nature, no Disgust ever following from the Pain it gives; no contrary Passion, as in all other Instances, to counteract, or any way disturb, the Freedom of its Operations. There is a secret Pleasure in the Exercise of it, that, for Sweetness of Delight, exceeds every Thing that has obtained that Name; and all those who are as yet Strangers to the Enjoyment of it, would do themselves a singular Courtesy in making the Experiment. But I hasten to

The *third* Thing proposed, which was to apply the Rule properly, as Matter rather of Reprehension, and to expose us to ourselves, than as comprehending the whole Duty of Man; something to abase us in our own Eyes for sinking beneath the very first Rudiments of Nature, as will now appear from the undeniable Instances I have singled out for that very Purpose: For who almost ever names this Rule but in Favour of themselves, hereby over-turning the whole Drift and Design of its Institution, the Fate of most Laws that have been made for the Protection of the Innocent. Those who can trample underfoot the Dictates, whether of Nature or Religion, to the Abuse of others, will yet expect that they should have their full Force in their Favour and for their Protection; ever misapplying this excellent Rule, and making it serve rather to discover the Naughtiness of their Neighbour's Actions than to regulate their own.

How

How loud and clamorous can we be in charging others with the Violation of this Precept; never considering that we may be doing, by this very Accusation, what is utterly condemned by it? For consult but your own Heart, and you will be soon made sensible how unkindly such a Sentence would sit upon it. If therefore you would have this Precept do its proper Office, keep it before your Eyes in all your Dealings with each other; that when the sordid View of Gain would tempt you to deal unjustly with your Brother; to take Advantage of his Ignorance, and over-reach him; or of his present Necessities to gripe and squeeze him: When such Temptations do beset you, call out for this Measure; it is ever in your Keeping, and it will wonderfully guard and fortify against the Approaches of Dishonesty.

And tho' we might be sure of doing the accursed Thing undiscovered; yet the very Thought, that we ourselves, from whom it never can be hid, should esteem the same Thing base and vile in another, will suddenly inspire us with a certain Greatness of Mind, which will make us scorn and loath the doing of that, for the Sake of a little pitiful Gain, which we should esteem wicked and utterly condemn in another; and for which we may be sure our own Conscience will never cease to upbraid and condemn us.

And seeing that a Man's Reputation is a Possession the nearest and dearest to him of any he can enjoy; therefore I could wish, in the next Place, that they who are apt herein to take a barbarous Freedom with others, would not think it too much Trouble to carry this little Compendium of the Law and the Prophets always openly about them. There is nothing more common than this hateful Vice; those call'd the Better

Sort of People are deeply tainted with it; and tho' perhaps they refrain from openly flandering and abusing their Neighbour, yet they frequently delight to hear others do it; and are too well pleased with any little Stories that tend to the Prejudice of their Reputations, to be held wholly Guiltless. Let such then, if they desire to be cured of the Symptoms of this deadly Malady, carefully apply this Medicine.

There is no Occasion for sending out for Advice, or consulting with any one about the Measure or Manner of making the Application, they have it all readily prepared within themselves; and let them only consider how tender they are of their own Good-name, and how great a Price they set upon it; let them but call to Mind the sad Uneasiness they have sometimes felt, from cruel and disparaging Reflections they have thought levelled against them; how much Bitterness of Soul such a Matter has occasioned; what Heart-burning and Depression of Spirit they have felt, from what was only another's Diversion, the Exercise of his Tongue, or the Sport of a wanton Wit; let such Reflections work their Will, and the Cure's as good as perfected. Let but all those who are prone to this, thus play Nature against itself, and they will soon feel how far from Right it is to rob a Neighbour of that inward Peace, which they know to be the very Life of their own Souls; and, for the future, will never chuse, for the Gratification of a silly Humour, to vex and torment a Brother. Most Men, that are not abandoned, esteem the Loss of their Money or Estate much more tolerable than the Loss of their Reputation; nay, Death itself seems more eligible than to out-live one's Good-name. Should any one then, short of a Murderer,

derer, or who would tremble at the Thoughts of staining his Hands in his Brother's Blood, yet stab his Reputation to the Heart?—It would be impossible, were but this Rule constantly kept in View, and allowed to do its Office as a Monitor; and which, by-and-by, it will most certainly execute in the more direful Shape of a Scourge of Conscience.

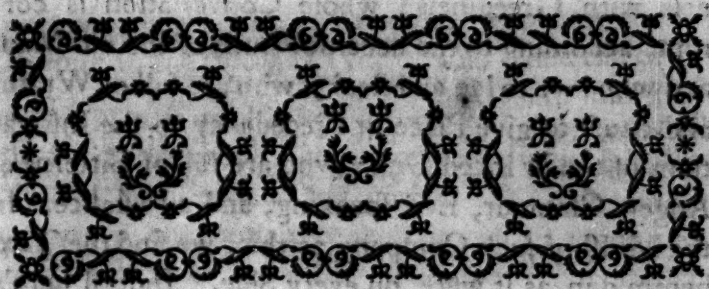
Again: Let the Invidious, Spiteful, and Malicious (Characters too frequently found amongst us, to the Disgrace of our Kind; who can find an unnatural Pleasure in teasing and tormenting others, with little studied Affronts and Injuries) call forth the Spirit of this Golden Rule, and it will instantly and convincingly give them to know how irksome the Effects of Spite and Malice are when it lights upon themselves: What Heat, what Passion, what Rage does it provoke! How does the Heart burn with Resentment, and how are the Brains racked to invent Ways of Retaliation! This fatal Scene, when represented to the Life by the Act of our own Imagination, will feelingly convince them of the Injustice and Inhumanity of all such Kind of Treatment; and from the very Weakness of their Nature, so wonderful is the Constitution of our Frame, shall be instructed in this fundamental Truth, That if it be so hard and grating to bear an Injury, it must be extremely barbarous and wicked to offer it. Here then the great Rule would be again of excellent Service.

Lastly, Let us remember it when the Wants of the Needy, in any Kind, cry out for Relief. When any Object of Pity presents itself, whether made so by Poverty, Distemper or Oppression, think of their Sufferings, and bring them home to yourselves. Execute

cute this but honestly and trust the rest to Nature. A sympathetick Warmth lodged in her Bosom, as a standing Image of the Mercy of him that made her, will suddenly break forth, melt down the Heart with Compassion, and thereby not only instruct you what you ought to do on these Occasions, in every good Word and Work, but will even exalt the Performance; making of it, by a Kind of Heavenly Constraint, the very Condition of our own Peace and Quiet of Mind.—But to conclude.

Since then, in the Midst of all the Darkness and Confusion we complain of, for Want of an infallible Guide, we have this still left us, so grafted in our Nature, that we cannot quite put out its Light: Let us therefore implore the Divine Majesty, that as he has been pleased, thus far, however, to give us plainly to perceive and know what Things we ought to do, that he would grant us likewise Grace and Power faithfully to fullfill the same, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD: To whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R.



S E R M O N IV.

EPHESIANS iv. 30.

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of GOD, whereby ye are sealed unto the Day of Redemption.

HERE is something so exquisitely tender in this Expression, that those who can hear it without being grieved themselves, must be such as are, through Ignorance or Vice, harden'd to the Degree the Scriptures term *past feeling*; especially if we do but consider with what Sort of base Treatment this Despise and Cruelty is done towards the Spirit of Grace, by such wretched Creatures as we are; and in the Midst of what a woful Catalogue of our Sins and Follies this patheticall Exhortation is inclosed.

The Matter of Grievance to him is, that Mankind, refusing his Wisdom and Conduct, chuse rather to walk after the Vanity of their own Minds, having their foolish Hearts and shallow Understandings still farther darken'd by evil Deeds; wholly alienated from the Life of God; who have given themselves over to Lasciviousness, to work all Unclean-
ness

ness with Greediness; whose Conversation is corrupt, according to the deceitful Lusts of the old Man, and who love to lye and steal; who are full of Wrath, and chuse to give Place or Precedency to the Instigations of the Wicked One; who are full of Bitterness, Anger, Clamour, Evil-speaking, and all Malice. In the Midst of such Company as this, we find the Text hemm'd in, as it were, on every Side. Indeed here's enough not only to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, but every Soul of Man that wears the Heart, or indeed the Face, of a rational Creature; and more especially those who are in any great Degree subject to all, or any, of these vile, these desperate Enormities.

The Person too, in whose Name the Apostle here makes this Request, is so great and so good, and the Request itself is so humble and condescending, that it would be much Pity to have it denied. To have the Holy Spirit of God grieved, because wretched Man, lost and undone, will not let him do his Office of Redemption upon him, carries with it such a Degree of Insolence, mingled with Folly, as nothing but invincible Blindness can possibly plead an Excuse for, and for which nothing but infinite Mercy can find a Pardon. And it is great Charity to suppose this to be the Case of all that can stand out against such Lowliness and Mercy in the Almighty Creator; who does not here ask us to yield him Cause of Joy or Content, in answering the Design of his Creation; but only that we would not grieve him, by refusing to be sealed by his redeeming Power. I find myself moved to aggravate this Matter to your Apprehensions, not without a Kind of Indignation against myself, for being found in Likeness

ness of so ungrateful a Creature, who can thus do Despite to the Spirit of Grace, who alone can deliver him from that Bondage of Sin and Death into which he is inevitably fallen; and out of which none can rescue him but he who offers it, and is rejected.

And this I shall attempt by setting forth,

I. The Dignity of the Person in whose Name the Request is made; he is no less than the Holy Spirit of God, who thus offers to seal us to the Day of Redemption. And,

II. The Request itself; do not, or be not willing therefore to grieve him.

First, then, I am to speak of the Person, and the Offer here made by him, of sealing to Redemption. Now this Person is set forth with an Energy in the Original, which our Tongue is not able to reach, being there styled the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God; that is, as near as we can come, the only living and true GOD.

Now, there are two Sorts of Persons that no Man in his Senses would grieve, that is the Great and the Good; and he is super-eminently both. God is himself a Spirit, and he hath many Spirits, created in his Power, and wholly at his Command; but he hath one above all, uncreated, of his own Substance, and who is indeed GOD himself. Our Saviour CHRIST teaches us to take Notice of him, as of a Wind that bloweth where it listeth. We know that by its Effects; for to no Sense but such a Feeling is it subject. When

When we observe what it brings to pass in the outward World, and in our own Bowels too, tho' we see it not, yet we cannot but know it acts with Power uncontrollable, working Life or Death in every Thing. Now, we are sure such Power cannot subsist of itself, but must have some Substance in which it inheres: In like Manner we may obtain a Notion of the Spirit of God by his Operations. When we see the Wonders he hath done upon Nature; what strange Works he hath wrought on the Souls of Men, making them attempt, and enabling them to execute, what is beyond, and directly contrary to, every Affection and View that belongs to the natural Man; superceding all the Principles that constitute the human Frame, even that Foundation one of Self-preservation, together with the whole Wisdom and Prudence of the worldly Life: When we see this we become sure that it could not come to pass but by the Agency of some Spirit that has Dominion over the first Creation; and because it thus changes its temporary Laws, and reverses its momentary Establishments at Pleasure. By his Ministry both the outward as well as the moral World, was turned upside down, inside outward, when he first introduced Christianity into it with Power. The Greatness then of this Spirit may be estimated by the Greatness of his Works. He makes a new World, and fills it with new Creatures, both more perfect and wonderful than what his first Moving upon the Face of the Waters originally produced.

And as he is thus great in Power, so is he no less exalted in Holiness. To make him appear great, according to the Estimation of Men, his Style and Title of Magnificence should have been The Spirit of

of Principalities, Might, Majesty, Dominion, and Government. Of all these too, the Apostle tells us, he is the Fountain; but Choice is made of none of them, when he is to be set forth unto Men as the Sealer of their Redemption. This only of Holy is selected from them all. His beloved Title, whereby he would be distinguished by us, is not High and Mighty; no, nor Great and Glorious; but only that of the Holy Spirit. Nor do the Seraphims and Powers of Heaven thrice cry either Great, or High, or Strong, but only Holy, Holy, Holy, to the LORD GOD Almighty himself. This is his sovereign Attribute, and whereby we best laud and magnify his glorious Name. His Holiness is placed even before LORD GOD of Hosts. Here are two Reasons then why we should not grieve him, because he is Great, and because he is Good: But still farther, because his Mercy towards us endureth for ever. He offers to seal us to the Day of Redemption; and to grieve Him, by denying him to do us such a Favour, opens a still more aggravating Circumstance.

It is observable that, of all the three Persons of the Godhead, none has so many Denominations, with respect to the manifold Benefits bestowed upon us, as this Divine Spirit. He first is called the Mover, as we read in *Genesis*, or the Power of Vegetation in his new created World; then he is styled the Soul of Life in every living Creature; then, of an Heavenly Spirit, of a double Life in Man. In *Bezaleel*, he is the Author of Art; in the Seventy Elders, Wisdom for Government; and even in *Balaam*, the Word of Prophecy. All these are from the Spirit of God: But from him, as Holy, springs the best of his Gifts, even Grace; by which he makes Men
Saints,

Saints, Servants, and Sons to the living God. He gives Grace to reprove and check; Grace to guide and lead into all Truth; Grace to teach and bring all valuable Things to our Remembrance; Grace to quicken and stir up our dull and becalm'd Minds; Grace to ask what we otherwise know not how to pray for; Grace that sheds abroad Love in our Hearts; and, which is the most sovereign of all the seven, he gives that Grace which seals us to the Day of Redemption; that which sanctifies, severs, and sets us apart from the rest of the World, and makes us his own Peculiar.

The Redemption indeed is CHRIST's; we were Captives to a Law in our Members, saith the Apostle, carnal, and sold under Sin: From the Power of this Curse he hath ransom'd and redeem'd us, and that at no less Price than of himself, which was paid down at the Day of his Death on the Cross: But he himself tells us of another Day, when, at his second appearing, he bids us lift up our Heads, for then it is our Redemption draweth nigh. Till then it is not full and perfect; for, notwithstanding the first Fruits of the Spirit, we groan still, as subject to Vanity and Corruption; and all the Creatures together with us do the same. *The whole Creation groaneth and travaileth together in Pain untill now.* Against this Day of final Redemption it stands us in Hand to provide that we are sealed, and have this Mark of Separation from the World express'd in our Foreheads. For to all that are not so distinguished, it will be said at the last Day, *I know you not.* Which Process was prefigured in the Passover; the Lamb slain was the Redemption, but the Posts stricken with the Blood was

was the Sign that hindered the Destroyer from entering.

Now, this Sealing, or Signature, and without which nothing is authentick, is the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit ; whose Office we must pass, that the whole Godhead may co-operate, as in the Work of Creation, so in the Business of our eternal Salvation. CHRIST without the Holy Ghost is as ineffectual as a Deed without a Seal, or a Testament without an Executor. All that CHRIST hath wrought for us, the Spirit must work in us ; and hereby he sets to the Seal of Redemption : Nor can any other execute this Office. The Spirit of the World, which is too properly our own, knows, nor can know, nothing of the Matter. Moral Virtues many Heathens could boast, and so may those who call themselves Christians, whensoever they are so disposed ; and perhaps the World shall speak well of them, for speaking well of themselves, as well as for doing well unto themselves : But still here's no Seal set against the Day of Redemption. Nothing of this Kind, that's better than the Spider's Web, can be spun out of ourselves. Nothing but the Breath of God can kindle this new Life : Nothing but the Holy Spirit can awaken and bring to good Effect the redeeming Powers. It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves ; God the Father : It is he that hath redeemed us, and not we ourselves ; God the Son : It is he that must seal us, and not we ourselves ; God the Holy Ghost. The whole Glory of Man's Salvation must redound to the whole Trinity of God ; and that jointly and separately ; that he who rejoices may rejoice in the LORD, and that thus his Joy may be full. All Things, but Man himself, are ready
and

and prepared for putting the finishing Hand to this astonishing Design: GOD has made, CHRIST has redeemed, and, if we grieve him not with our Sins, the HOLY GHOST is ready to do the last Office, and seal us to the Day of Redemption; which leads me to

The *second* Thing I promised to consider, which was the Request itself, *Do not*, or be not willing to, *grieve the Holy Spirit of GOD.*

Now, in managing, deeply and clearly, this Point, some Difficulties will arise; but, by the Help of GOD, we shall get over them all.

This Request seems but small, and is proposed with such Modesty, as to carry with it rather the Air of a Courtesy, than the Demand of a Duty. The Apostle pleads not to have him treated worthily, to be received with Joy; or that his Name should be glorified; but only that Evil be not spoken, and Hatred return'd for his Good-will towards Men. Only, *Do not grieve.* Solomon says, Reason would that we should not grieve any of our Neighbours, seeing we dwell securely by them. But with what barbarous Freedom soever we may deal with each other, we should in anywise fear to offend GOD in this Manner. *Is it not enough*, saith the Prophet, *that ye weary Men, but will you weary my GOD also?—Provoke him not*, saith the Apostle, *for are we stronger than he?* Nay, farther, if we provoke GOD, yet not the Holy Spirit of GOD, Sins and Grievances against both Father and Son, may be, and are, forgiven, as CHRIST himself assures us; but Sin against him shall never be forgiven.

Were

Were it but the Spirit of Man, our own, we should be ever careful how we load it with any great Offence, as knowing how hardly Things of this Kind press upon it: The Stings of Conscience are worse than the Piercings of a Sword, and the Upbraidings of the Heart harder to be endured than a Dart struck through the Liver. Here, in this Part of our Nature it is that the Worm is bred that never dies, never ceases to twist, never leaves off gnawing. Every Man that is not quite dead to Shame, that is not fear'd with invincible Stubbornness, must know in part somewhat of this Feeling. Now, the Apostle here tells us, that something like this Offence may be done to the Spirit of God.

But here Reason steps forward, and throws a Difficulty in our Way. How can GOD, who is confessedly without Passions, as well as Parts, be affected with Grief? We shall be no Gainers by the Question, I'm confident, when it is thus answered. For, tho' it be true, that GOD has no Passions, we may, notwithstanding, do what in us lies to grieve him; and the Endeavour, or Will, to do this great Evil, may render us guilty of the Crime, tho' the Effect, with regard to him follow not. If the high super-eminent Perfection of his Nature renders him incapable of any such troublesome Affections; yet if we do our utmost to make Grief fall into the Divine Essence; tho' we cannot execute it, yet the daring Disposition shall stir up such Indignation and Rebuke in our own Souls, as if the Fact had been, on all Sides, really perpetrated. There is a Case put by our Saviour in the Gospel, which may serve to throw some Light upon this Difficulty. *Whoso, saith he, looketh with Lust, hath committed Adultery;* and yet the Person with

whom this mental Adultery is committed, may be all the while perfectly clear, wholly unmoved. In like Manner may Man grieve and vex GOD in the Idea of his own evil and rebellious Heart, though the Deity remain all the while in perfect Peace.

GOD forbid that we should think it in the Power of base Flesh and Blood, to raise such Perturbations in the Almighty, as we poor Worms are subject to; and which, indeed, constitute the Misery of our Nature. But yet all our Passions are ascribed to him in Scripture, and in the same Scriptures as flatly denied to be in him: Such as Anger, Repentance, and Jealousy, as well as Grief. Thus, *it repented GOD that he had made Saul King*; and in the same Chapter it is asserted, *That the Strength of Israel is not a Man, that he should repent*. Here the Gifts and Callings of GOD are sure, because from him who knows no Repentance; there we find him again represented as quite tired with Repenting. One while he is grieved at the Heart, and at others, there is that Fullness of Joy with him for evermore, as excludes all of this Kind. Thus, then, these different Expressions are easily and safely understood: When these Affections are denied to be in GOD, the steady Perfection of the Deity, no ways obnoxious to our Imbecilities, is the Point of sound Divinity to be set forth; when they are ascribed to GOD, the Consequences of them, with regard to us, is what is wholly intended, and what alone should engage our Attention.

GOD will deal by us under these Circumstances, in like Manner as we should, when so moved, think it reasonable to deal; and to be dealt withal. And
this

this he ever professes, that he will judge us according to our own Way of judging; mete with the Measure we mete with, and forgive as we have forgiven. Now, as we seldom punish home, but when we are angry, or do any Thing indeed to Purpose, till our Affections are stirr'd, and Passion give an Edge to Execution: Therefore to speak in our Language, that his Speech may be intelligible to us, God is said to be angry, when he proceeds to punish as effectually as if he were so. And thus because our Love towards any Thing is found slack till a Mixture of Jealousy, or Dread for the Loss of the beloved Object be joined to it, he is therefore represented as a jealous God, because his Love to his Creatures is superlatively great.

Again: We alter not what we have determined, except we repent of our Determinations; so when God seems to alter his Course, which he, to our Observation, formerly held, we say, He repents; tho' his Purpose and the seeming Change are both as unchangeable as his Nature. It is just the same in the Case now before us: We withdraw not our Countenance, or Conversation from our Intimates, till some Grievance make a Breach in our Friendship; and from this Observation, form a parallel Case, when the good Spirit, for our Neglect of his Help, or Abuse of his Gifts, no longer offers either, but withdraws his Countenance, and is no more seen or felt; then it is said, That he hides his Face because he has been grieved.

Whether therefore he be in himself grieved or not, it is all the same to us, if we are to be surely treated as if he were; and it would be more to our Purpose,

than philosophising upon the Matter, to avoid giving him any Cause to do that towards us, which Men do towards each other when despitely or carelessly intrated; and more especially at that Season when offered Service is their only Occasion of Address: For if this be our Manner of Behaviour towards him, he will as surely forsake and withdraw himself from us, as, for such like Deportment, every Friend upon Earth will depart.

But, in Truth, that Portion of Goodness which God of his Grace has given into our Nature, to counteract the Bad that is settled there: That Spirit within us, that is said to lust against the Flesh, even as the Flesh lusteth against it, he has of his infinite Mercy so interwoven with our Souls, as to become a Part of our better Nature; and, in the Apostle's Account, is the first of the three Principles that constitute the whole Man, Spirit, Soul, and Body; so he sums us up: And, in this Light, it submits to be acted upon, and dealt with, as any other Portion of ourselves. It really becomes, as St. Paul says of the Spirits of the Prophets, *subject to the Prophets*. And if we treat it not with Respect; if we obey not its Admonitions and Directions; if we make no good Use of it, reject its offered Kindness with Scorn, or in anywise turn it into Lasciviousness, and endeavour to make it serve with our Sins, it will, thus abused, like any of our other Affections, Parts, or Abilities, grow weak, sicken, and finally depart and vanish from before us. Neglect has grieved it, and Unkindness has killed it; nor is there here any Thing strange or unusual, but all according to the common Way of working in Evil as well as Good. The evil Spirit of the World that works Mischief in us, and
would

would seal us to the Day of Destruction; would do just the same; were he equally mortified with Neglect, and grieved with continual Contradiction and Contempt; thus treated he would depart; thus resisted he would assuredly fly from us.

By this Time I may presume the Phrase no longer troubles us; but we are sensible that we may, in such Manner, grieve the Holy Spirit as to hurt ourselves, tho' we hurt not him; and that to such a Degree as never to be forgiven for the Offence.

I shall therefore add only an useful Reflection or two upon the whole, and have done.

Whensoever then we find, in Scripture, human Affections attributed to GOD, let us make it a Rule to bring the Matter home to ourselves; for it is thus written wholly for our Use. When GOD is said to be jealous, be jealous over yourselves; when he is said to be angry at Sin, be you so, as that you sin not; when he is said to repent, sorrow you unto Repentance; when he is said to be grieved, beware especially of all grievous Offences. It must be something very desperate that can, in any Sense, be said to grieve the Holy Spirit; and somewhere this Affliction, be sure of it, will light heavy; it is brought forth, and a Dwelling-place it must have; and if it reach not into him, it will recoil back upon the Heart, and fix in the Soul that produced it. The only Way then to prevent or remedy this impending Evil, (for if we, in anywise, come short of his Grace, we have none to save us) is to take to ourselves the Affection in Truth, that is here figuratively attributed to him; and if, with broken and contrite Spirits, we humble

our Souls under his Almighty Hand ; if, with unrepented Sins, we quench not this Spirit of Love, he is ready in his Office, not only to seal us to the Day of Redemption, but to soften our Hearts like the melting Wax, that, the Impression being fair, we shall be readily acknowledged of God, accepted of **CHRIST**, and inhabited by himself to all Eternity. To him therefore, with the Father and the Son, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

SER.





S E R M O N V.

HOSEA vi. 4.

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your Goodness is as a Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew it gaeth away.

 We have here a tender and moving Complaint taken up against *Ephraim* and *Judah*; but the Occasion of it is a Matter that concerns us all at this Day equally with them. The Scripture makes its Address often to particular People by Name, but the Reproach, or Admonition, lies against all Human Kind, that come under the like Tempers and Dispositions; and which indeed makes it that living and enduring Word that abideth speaking now and for evermore. If there be any material Difference in the Case now before us, the Disadvantage, I fear, will be found to lie on our Side, and that the Case is rather worse with us than with them. Our Goodness, God knows, if we have had any amongst us, can't be so properly said to be going up as the early Dew, but to be gone; whether up or down, it is vanished as though it had never been; like the Path of an Arrow, no Sign or Footstep to be seen; insomuch that we are at a Loss to know where to look, whether Morning or Evening, for any Thing like a living Wit-

Witness of the Kind. But as Complaints of this Nature avail but little, I shall spare them; and, supposing some Portion of Goodness, more than will just serve to our Condemnation, still remaining amongst us, shall, in my following Discourse, endeavour to rectify some mistaken Notions concerning the Degrees of it, that are necessary to make us accepted in the Beloved.

Temporary Holiness, or such Sort of Goodness as is for Durance only as the Morning Cloud, or that goeth away as the early Dew, moves only God's Pity and Displeasure: And we sadly deceive ourselves if we think that exerting a little such-like religious Deportment now and then, rather of Constraint than of a ready Mind; or making a Shew of some fair Beginnings, whose Hopes, nevertheless, fail in the Issue, is that Righteousness that will save our Souls alive. *He that endureth unto the End, saith CHRIST, shall be saved: And he that is faithful unto Death, saith St. John, and He only, has the Crown of Life beld forth unto him.*

Now this Failure in point of Constancy, upon strict Examination, I fear, we shall find,

I. In our pious Purposes.

II. In our religious Practices. Which two Points being established, the remaining Time shall be employed,

III. In some wholesome Admonitions, and in laying down some Rules, whereby we may confirm the Motions of God's gracious Goodness in us, and keep it even unto the End.

First,

First, then, I am to shew that our pious Purposes are not to be depended upon: They are but too much like the Morning Cloud, and, as the early Dew, they go away in a Vapour, and are no more. *Let not the Part of a good Desire over-pass thee*, saith the Wise Man; he speaks of it as a Thing very like so to do.

We may think ourselves wise, and well aware of our Weakness in this Particular; and therefore, to prevent our starting back from our Religious Designs, we fence our Hearts with many a Resolution, and perhaps add Vows to strengthen them. But though we may resolve to wrap ourselves up never so close, to keep out Temptations, yet when either the Sunshine of Prosperity melts us, or the Storms of Affliction ruffle and discompose us, we soon let go our Hold, and all our goodly Intentions vanish as easily as we lose a Dream: And this will ever be the Case, so long as we trust in ourselves. How frequent is it for Men, after Vows, to make Inquiry? Perhaps it was rash, or impossible to be kept: Or the Case is altered by some new emergent Circumstance hitherto unthought of: Or if no Shift of this Kind offers, why then we grow froward and desperate, so break the Knot we could not untie, and cast away the Cord from us. Then the unclean Spirit usually re-enters, with seven others more wicked than himself. *Vow not at all*, saith our Saviour, as knowing what was in Man; and that if he did keep it, it would be more out of Honour towards himself, as a Compliment to his own Determinations, than from any settled Principle of Goodness residing within; for that would have done the Business effectually without it.

And

And indeed what can Vows signify to him that, ever since his Baptismal one, has done nothing else but break them? That, for Years together, has been perpetually resolving against what he daily acts? These present renouncing of our Sins, prove seldom better grounded than was *Amnon's* thrusting out his beloved Sister, when he was weary of her. Thus, when our Appetite is gone under that Dejection, we are vex'd perhaps, and dissatisfied, that we have lost our Innocence and our Peace in Exchange only for Shame and Disquiet; and, in this Temper, resolve to sin no more: But all this is little otherwise than, after a full Meal, to talk of fasting; which it is very easy to do, and that with seeming Sincerity: But let Hunger be importunate; let delicate Meats and pleasing Company entice, and we shall soon see whether the Temptation or the Resolution be the stronger.

And I am persuaded that God, of his Goodness towards us, has so ordered this Matter; leaving us thus to be foiled perpetually in the Issue of our own Resolutions, in order to keep us under a continual Dependence upon his Grace alone. To convince us that, separate from his Influence, we have neither Health nor Strength to stand against the Powers of natural Corruption; and that this Grace is purely a Gift of God, to be sought after by continual Prayer, and to be obtained, from Day to Day, as our daily Bread. Our Help stands in the Name of the LORD: And as our good Purposes, form'd upon our own pious Resolutions, are not to be depended upon, so likewise, as I purpos'd to shew

In the *second* Place, our Religious Practices, when trusted to the like Principle, are of no longer or certain Continuance.

The Human Virtues are a moving Body, and tho' they make a gallant Appearance when present, yet seldom stay long in a Place. Thus we read, in the Gospel Parable, of the five foolish Virgins; they set forth towards the Bridegroom, as forward as any of the five wise ones; and their Lamps, for a while, shined as gloriously, whilst they lasted, yet because they continued not, the Doors were finally shut against them. King *Agrippa* made such a religious Start when he professed himself almost persuaded to be a Christian: And *Felix*, such another, when he trembled at *Paul's* Preaching, yet cared to hear no more of it.

But Religion is made one entire Mistake of, if we think it the Business of a Day only. Its very Essence is Conversion; and when otherwise apprehended, it becomes an empty dead Thing; a Nothing, nay, something worse, a meer Scene of Hypocrisy.

How is it that we do not understand, that the keeping of a Fast now and then, or the receiving of a Sacrament, or any other outward Act, (tho' this be more than some that suffer themselves to be called Christians can pretend to) cannot possibly take away Sin, or atone for the Commission of it? Repentance, and the Salvation it leads to, is never the nearer, because we can, when Custom invites to holy Duties, lay aside our carnal Affections for a Time; if, when the formal Turn is served, we chearfully go back to Nature, and wallow again in the Mire of Sin.

There

There was a Time when profane *Eſau* could ſhed Tears to get a Bleſſing: Even *Pharaoh* himſelf relent-
ed for a while; *I have ſinned*, ſaith he, *forgive me*,
intreat the LORD for me: Firſt he would let the
Men go, then their Little ones, then their Cattle too;
yet after all he periſhed in his Obſtinacy.

Balaam could wiſh to die the Death of the Right-
eous, even while he was purſuing the Wages of Un-
righteouſneſs: *Pilate* had no ſmall Remorſe at firſt
on *CHRIST*'s Behalf, yet at laſt crucified him: *He-
rod*, we read, did many Things, and heard *John*
gladly, yet at length beheaded him: This his hear-
ing was, it ſeems, but a Sort of Carnal Gladneſs, tho'
in a Spiritual Matter; *John* preached and pleaſed
him, much after the ſame Manner that *Herodias* af-
terwards danced and pleaſed him; with this Differ-
ence only, that the Dancer, in the End, got the bet-
ter of the Preacher.

If theſe Inſtances, in this Point, are not intelligible
and awakening, it is becauſe our Underſtandings, as
well as Goodneſs, are clouded, or gone away toge-
ther, as the early Dew.

But now, amidſt all this Couſenage and Deceit,
all theſe Errors and Inconſtances, how ſhall we af-
ſure our Hearts before *GOD*? How ſhall we eſtabliſh
our Goodneſs, and make it permanent? How ſhall we
be ſure when we are ſincere? And untill ſomething of
this Kind be done for the Soul, it can know no Peace.
A conſtant and regular Demeanor towards *GOD*, in
Religious Duties, will not be a ſufficient Teſtimony:
The *Jews* carried all theſe Matters to the Height, at
the very Time when they crucified the Son of *GOD*,
and

and murdered his Followers. This is a Work that every regular and diligent Person may and will do of Course, were it only to rid their Hands of it, and get done; or perhaps (for some such religious Traffickers there are) to compound with their Consciences to lie the quieter on other Occasions.

Nor will weeping for our Sins be Ground sufficient for us to conclude that our Goodness is fix'd in the Sight of God, and that we are at real Enmity with our Corruptions: For this is a Passion so cheap and obvious, that it proceeds not only from Sorrow and Indignation, but from Love, Joy, Pity, and Affections merely fantastick. A Romance can cause it as readily as Truth; and a Tale well told, though we believe not a Word of it. Some can weep for every trifling Accident, too small to go to the Bottom of the Heart, and for which the least Passion is too great an Expend; and indeed they are oftentimes found most fickle, who are most subject to its Impressions.

But suppose a Man makes Prayers against Sin, and repeats them constantly, this surely will argue a settled Aversion, and that Nature is now in a fair Way to be disarmed, finally conquered and cast out: But even here no less Man than St. *Austin* confesseth that he prayed against the sinful Heats of his Youth, and all the while secretly wish'd that God would not hear him too soon.

Here the preposterous Notion of praying without Desire, and asking for what we have no Mind to receive, is strongly manifested. If none of these will give the Assurance we want, it may be said, What then can? How shall we distinguish the Workings of
God's

God's Grace from the Motions of our own Goodness? There is an Answer ready at Hand, if you will but receive it; for there it sticks, and that up to the Certainty of a Demonstration; for there is nothing difficult or abstruse in the Question; 'tis its being too obvious that renders it hard to be received.

Now, seeing a Man cannot will against his Desire, because they are both as one, nor chuse what he really detests; for this would be making Chusing and Refusing to be the same: Hence it is manifest we may be certain, and not otherwise, that our Confession, that our Tears, and that our Prayers have been in earnest, and spring from a true Ground, not from ourselves, but from the Grace of God, by the Event. Every Thing, indeed, has its Proof in the End, and thither must we refer for Certainty in this Matter: For Acts and Deeds may as well be done, as Words be spoken, in Hypocrisy.

If then we so bewail our Sinfulness as to hate it, and so to hate it as never again to entertain it with Complacency; if we constantly resist it with Abhorrence, and so finally prevail over it, then, and not till then, we may conclude our Repentance to have been sincere. We are then become new Creatures in Righteousness and true Holiness; this Conversion is surely the Work of God upon our Souls; for we may depend upon it, that no Goodness in our Nature will ever act, thus constantly and steadily, against itself, and its own mistaken Interest.

We have now seen what wretched Materials our Goodness is compounded of; and that it is, when tried to the Bottom, but little better than our Badness. It

is

is as dark as the Morning Cloud, and as unstable as the early Dew; fit only to be dispersed at the Rising of the Morning Star, and to be driven away when the Day-spring from on high visits our Souls.

I shall now, according to my Promise,

In the *third* Place, lay down some Rules, or rather propose some Expedients, whereby we may confirm the Motions of God's gracious Goodness in us, and keep it even unto the End; that so this Body of Sin and Death we bear about us, may not finally, and for ever, be our Ruin.

First, then, let us be ever jealous and watchful over our inbred Corruptions: For they are the very Essence of our fallen Nature, the Basis upon which our present evil Life is built and stands. Thus grounded, they become invincibly stubborn, beyond the Reach of any Strength or Power left in ourselves to root out or destroy. Our own Abilities in Goodness will be found, on Trial, even good for nothing; they are no better than a broken Reed, that pierces the Hand, instead of supporting the Feet of him that leans upon it: For though our Out-works be ever so well guarded, yet this Enemy within will wait an Occasion to set open the Gate wide to our Destruction. It has the subtle Serpent for its Author, and its very Guise is Cunning; and in order to avoid approaching Danger to its Life, it will, like other venomous Creatures, pretend to lie dead; and, in this still and silent State, beguile our Attention, till Neglect administer Occasion to exert itself with Power.

The Holy Scriptures abound with Examples fitly calculated to give us Admonition, and to keep us continually

tinually upon the Watch against the Wiles of this inborn and desperately subtle Adversary.

Two notorious Instances, set forth in the Persons of *Lot* and *Noah*, I shall single out and set before you. *Lot*, we read, continued undefiled in his earlier Days, vex'd in Soul at the Conversation of the impure *Sodomites*; yet when he was turn'd loose to himself, and dwelt solitary in the Cave of a Mountain, how easily did his own Daughters, or rather the wanton Remains of his own Dispositions, in old Age, most basely corrupt him.

Noah lived temperately, amongst all the Revellings of the old World; yet after he had escaped the Flood of Waters, and had no Companion left to drink with him, he was at length, as a private Sot, drowned in a Deluge of Wine, to his Shame.

Now, neither of these eminently good Men were sufficiently aware of the Instability of their own Goodness, and the superior Force of a corrupt Principle in Nature: And so, tho' they got the Victory, by Grace, in the greater Conflicts, yet they were, without it, shamefully overcome by the less.

Hence, therefore, let us learn to think ever humbly and meanly of all natural Abilities towards real Goodness of any Kind. *Happy is the Man that feareth alway*, saith *Solomon*; but *he that hardeneth his Heart shall fall into Mischief*. And it is *St. Paul's* Advice, *Let no Man deceive himself; if any Man seemeth to be wise, let him become a Fool, i. e. in his own Esteem, that he may be wise*. But, above all Things, let us stand, as much as we can, out of the Way of Temptation.

tation. There is a Share in every Man's Constitution, and none so like to fall into it as he that thinks himself secure. He that will come nigh the Mouth of a Furnace, must expect to be scorched by the Flames: And for this Cause our Saviour teacheth us to pray that we enter not into Temptation, as knowing how apt we are to yield and be overcome by it. If, indeed, God please to try us, whether by Allurements or Afflictions, we ought, as St. *James* says, to count it all Joy: What he does must be for a good End, as a Trial of Faith, or an Exercise of Virtue; but if we go about to tempt ourselves, and invite the Enemy into our Quarters, it is easy to say who shall get the Victory. It is Madness to walk upon a Precipice, or to put our Hand upon the Cockatrice's Den, in hopes to please ourselves with the Triumph of a Deliverance: 'Tis glorious, indeed, to escape a Danger, but it is better not to come near it: Nor can the Ostentation of the Adventure make Recompence for the Hazard of miscarrying.

No Man, that regards Life or Health, will run rashly into a Pest-house; because, though his Constitution be strong, he may catch the Infection, and then it will rage with the greater Violence. Now, the Soul is as fruitful a Seminary of Sin, as the Body is of Diseases; use the best Preservatives we can, all will prove little enough: Let us therefore put on the whole Armour of God, and then we may hope to strive effectually against every spiritual Deceit; but all other Weapons will surely fail us.

There is much Inquiry made how we may know when Temptations are from Satan, and when from ourselves; the Matter is of no Importance; we had

much better take Care to resist than to distinguish them. When *Peter* questioned *Ananias*—*Why hath Satan filled thy Heart?* He expostulates the Matter with *Ananias*, and not with Satan; for if the Man had not laid himself open, the Foe could not have entered.

It concerns us, therefore, to withstand every Temptation which, though universally, never was, nor ever will be done; yet, as to Particulars, it is not impossible. This is our Victory, however, to be always contending. From CHRIST himself the Tempter departs but for a Season, though thrice repulsed. God has thought fit, during Life, to keep us in a Posture of War; and, thro' his Mercy, it will be our Righteousness and Crown, if we approve ourselves faithful in this Cause, though not always successful.

To conclude: Let us depend upon God for Help and Strength, and make no Account of what we may properly call our own Goodness; it is all a Cloud, it is merely a Vapour; no sure building upon it, no safe trusting in it: But if we cast ourselves naked upon his Mercy, who, in due Time, died for the Ungodly, we shall find his Grace sufficient to all Purposes of Godliness. So long as he continues the Warfare, he will send us Succours; and though our Goodness and very Heart fail us, yet shall we be upheld, even unto the End, by a Portion of that Might which is in JESUS CHRIST our LORD: And to whom therefore, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-



S E R M O N VI.

P S A L M lxxxv. 10.

Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.



WE have here Notice given us of the most illustrious and blessed Meeting that ever was recorded; and of which it is of more Concern and Comfort for Mankind to be apprised, than of that august Assembly, when Father, Son, and Holy Ghost met in the Beginning, and joined in the first Formation of the Universe. For if Mercy and Truth be at Odds; if Righteousness and Peace be at Enmity; if these great Attributes of GOD be disjoined in the Creature, and were never to be reconciled, better had it been for us if we had never been born; better had it been for the whole Creation if it had remained for ever in the sluggish Silence of its original Chaos. Better any Thing; better nothing, than to be, and to be at Strife eternally with our GOD and his Goodness! And this is the Ground of that strong Expression in our Liturgy; but above all, more than for Creation or Preservation, we are here taught to bless GOD for his inestimable Love in the Redemption of the

World. And, for ever blessed be his holy Name for the same, we are hereby given to expect better Things than this World can give us, and we have now a good Hope because of his Word. For tho' Mercy be little regarded, and Truth hath forsaken the Earth; tho' Righteousness be banished from amongst Men, and Peace passeth all human Understanding; yet we are told, Oh joyous Expectation, that they all may be recalled, and meet in perfect Harmony again! That there is a glorious Day decreed in the secret Councils of the unchangeable God, when Truth shall flourish out of the Earth, and Righteousness shall look down kindly from Heaven upon her; when Mercy and Truth shall meet in Friendship, and Righteousness and Peace shall kiss each other.

But that we may proceed orderly and distinctly to investigate, as far as we shall be enabled, this great Mystery of Godliness; for indeed the Matter now before us is of great Depth, and of infinite Consequence, I shall cast the little I can say upon it under these three several Heads.

I. I shall speak of the Parties here met together, and what was the Occasion of their having been ever separated.

II. Of the Person upon whose Account, and in whom, they are to have their Meeting after their long Estrangement from each other, the great Reconciler of all Things, the very Prince of Peace, CHRIST the Saviour is his Name.

And then,

III.

III. Which will serve by Way of Application, shall shew how they must, in some Sort, meet in us too, through him, before the Blessedness of their Junction be fully compleated and ended.

First, then, I am to speak of the Parties, here said to be met together; shewing, at the same Time, the Reason of their Meeting, and the Occasion of their having been ever separated.

They are no other than four of the great Attributes of Almighty God; and which are said, (it is told as a Wonder) to meet on some great Occasion here below, in the same Harmony and Friendship in which they exist in the Person of the Deity. But as the *Psalmist*, in the Text, treats them as living Persons, I shall observe the same Manner and Strain in my Comment upon it.

Now that Mercy and Peace should meet and accord at any Time or Place, is no strange Thing. They are so united in Nature, Temper, and Disposition, that perhaps they cannot be disjoined; Mercy ever leading to Peace, and Peace ever delighting in Mercy. The other two likewise, Truth and Righteousness, seem to be of one and the same Complexion, Disposition, and Tendency, and commonly take Part together.

Mercy moreover seems to favour Mankind, as a Set of poor deluded Wretches, and so the proper Objects of Pity and Compassion. Peace too cannot be an Enemy to Pardon and Reconcilement in the most desperate and bitter Quarrels. Both these are mild

and gentle, easy to be entreated, Strangers to Partiality, and, without any Respect of Persons, in all Causes, and on every Occasion, ready to unite and set every Thing that has been at Odds at one again.

But the other two, I fear, will not be found so ready and complying, but that their Meeting will be brought about with much Difficulty; such as, when effected, will give just Occasion for a Psalm of Wonder, Praise, and Thanksgiving. Righteousness or Justice is ever described as wearing of a Sword, and it will be found that she beareth not the Sword in vain. Truth likewise and Severity are too nearly related to be brought to Terms, without good Reason given, and full Satisfaction made: And therefore it is here set forth as great and unexpected News, that Righteousness should condescend even to look down upon the Earth at all. Such Injuries had been done her here, that she cannot enter amongst us, or so much as cast an Eye towards us: And for Truth, what Business, what Countenance can she expect amongst Men, Creatures remarkable for loving and making of Lies? She is said therefore to be fallen in our Streets, and perished from the Earth; of the whole Inhabitants of which both *David* and *Paul* assert, and that without Fear of being challenged for it, that they are Liars. So that Mercy will, I fear, be found little able to prevail upon Righteousness to give her a friendly Meeting here below, howsoever she may gain upon Truth, with whom indeed she seems to be upon rather better Terms; there being such a Relationship between them, as that they may sometimes stand together; they meeting in a Promise of Mercy, as well as in the Threatnings of Justice.

And

And so Righteousness, though inexorable to the Pleading of meer Mercy, yet will listen to, and consort with Peace. They met in *Melchisedec*; which is, by Interpretation, *King of Righteousness*; and at the same Time *King of Salem*, which is *King of Peace*.

And it is in this Manner that the Psalmist, in the Text, pairs and sorts them first, and then brings them together, Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace; they had been long parted, and now are represented as coming from divers Quarters, to give each other a propitious Meeting. The Occasion of their having been ever severed, is indeed Matter of Wonder, and well worth our Enquiry, since naturally they are no Strangers, but all four have lain together in the Bosom of God from all Eternity, as Attributes of his blessed and undivided Essence.

The Occasion then of their parting was this.—When Truth perished from the Earth, at the Fall of our first Parents, then they fell at Odds, and parted asunder: When the first Lye was told and believed—*Thou shalt not surely die*, though God had pronounced he should; then God's Truth was wronged, and Satan's false Insinuation trusted to. This was the Ground of the Quarrel that divided the Heavenly Properties, and set the Earthly at a Distance from them.

Mercy and Peace would still have *Adam's* Case relieved, but Righteousness and Truth could not endure it. Mercy is in itself an Inclination to pity all such as are in Misery and Distress, and, if she can, to relieve them; yea, tho' they deserve it not:

not: For she looks not at the Person who he is, or what he has done; but simply at the Sufferer, what he endures, and how wretched he is become.

And her Plea, on our Behalf, runs ever in this Style—Hath God made all Men for nought? What Profit is there in their Blood? It will make God's Enemies rejoice, if he should cast them off for ever, and will be no more intreated! Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and will he shut up his Loving-kindness in Displeasure? With such Intreaties she moves the Bowels of Blessedness, and melts them into Compassion; and, if there were no Opponent, would surely prevail on our Behalf. But Truth must be heard too, who puts in Matter of just Exception to all this: What, saith she, is the unchangeable God but the Stability of his Word? And that Word was to *Adam*, *Thou shalt surely die*, and to all the Children born in his Image and Likeness—*The Soul that sinneth it shall die*. God's Word is Truth, and falsified it must not be.

Now, Righteousness seconds all this; God is not only true in all his Words, but righteous in all his Works. He must render to every one according to his Deeds, and pay the Sinner his Wages due; and the Wages of Sin, are, by his own Appointment, Death: *And shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?* If the Sinner come off unpunished, and finds out a Way to contradict his Creator with Impunity, What becomes of Righteousness; what becomes of Truth?

In this Contention they part: Peace cannot obtain her End; Truth becomes an Exile in the Earth; and Righteousness forsakes it, and flies up to Heaven; but
Mercy

Mercy still stays below. Mercy delights to be where-ever Misery is found. She oft looks up to Heaven, but Righteousness will not look down upon her; she will have Satisfaction, or no Meeting in Peace is ever to be hoped for: And where is that to be found?

Our Salvation lies bleeding all this while; our Cause hangs in Suspence; and we stand as Prisoners at the Bar, not knowing what shall become of us. Truth and Justice must first be satisfied, before any Place can be found for Mercy and Peace to enter: And from whence is this Satisfaction to be hoped for?

Ask the *Turk*, for all Mankind have a Sense of this Want, and he will tell you, *Mahomet's* Prayers shall be upon you. But what are they? Suppose he was a just Man and a true Prophet, which he was not, yet they can move nothing but Mercy; Justice is not answered, nor is she moved with Intreaties.

Ask the Heathen, and he'll give a better Answer, but not satisfactory: He sees that, without shedding of Blood, there can be no Remission, and so he sacrifices his Beast: But, as the Apostle well observes, it is impossible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats can take away Sins. Justice finds no Satisfaction in such Kind of Commutations, as that of a Man's offending, and a Beast's suffering for it. Nay, if he go farther, and substitute, as some of them actually did, their First-born; give the Fruit of their Body for the Sin of their Soul, yet Justice remains dissatisfied. Neither Sense, nor Shew of it, is there in one Sinner's suffering for another Sinner's Crimes: No Man can deli-

deliver his Brother, or make an Agreement with God for him.

Ask next the *Jew*, and he'll tell you of his Lamb, without Blemish and without Spot; but all its Efficacy stands wholly in its being an Emblem, or Figure, of the true Lamb of God, that takes away the Sin of the World, and makes all righteous by Repentance, which is the true Death unto Sin. In him is full Satisfaction found: In him Righteousness uninjured, and Truth unfalsified, may meet Mercy in Kindness, and rest quietly together in everlasting Peace.

This leads me into my *second* general Head; under which I am to shew, That these long-estranged Persons can meet in none but our LORD and Saviour, the great Reconciler of all Things, the very Prince of Peace. He speaks thus to unchangeable Justice—Sacrifice and Offering for Sin thou wouldest not; but, lo, I come! I, the Word of Truth, come; give me a Body prepared; I'll take on me the Sinner's Nature, and do in it all thou can'st require; I'll make both Body and Soul an Offering for his Sin; and what can Justice demand farther? What would she more? The utmost of her Wants are now completely satisfied; Truth, too, has her proper Regards paid, and they together readily join Hands with Mercy and Peace. When Truth thus springs out of the Earth, which it never did from the Fall of the first *Adam* till the Birth of the second, then Righteousness looks down kindly from Heaven, and prepares to give her a friendly Meeting: And herein stands the Sum and Substance of the whole Christian Scheme: This Honour hath the Christian Religion to itself: This
 Glory

Glory doth dwell in our Land, and in none other but
such hallowed Ground, out of which Truth may grow
and flourish.

And yet some such wise Reasoners do we meet
with in this our Day, who can gravely inquire,
What Occasion is there for any Satisfaction at all?
Cannot God forgive any Offences against him of his
own free Mercy and Goodness? Why, yes, if God
would give up his Justice and Truth he might: But
these are as essential as his Mercy, of equal Regard,
and every way as dear to him. Justice must be satis-
fied, or God's Truth must fail; and we are told it
is impossible that God should lye; and neither sub-
stituted Sacrifices, or Meat Offerings, or Forms of
Prayer, can satisfy Justice. Nothing can do it short
of a Sacrifice of infinite Merit; nothing short of the
Death of one whose Righteousness is infinite, can pos-
sibly make Way for Mercy to enter. If Justice,
therefore, be not met and appeased, it will in Anger
meet the Sinner: And let him know, that he might
better meet a Bear robb'd of her Whelps, not-
withstanding all his good Words and his good
Works, as meet Justice, out of the Presence of
CHRIST! For when CHRIST, the Truth, springs out
of the Earth; when this Branch begins to grow out
of the Stem of Jesse, then, and not till then, Righte-
ousness looks down from Heaven. Before, indeed,
there were none below worth her looking after, or
that would have valued her Respects: But now, with
the Holy Angels of Heaven, she has a Desire not
only to look down, but to look into the Wonder of
an Heavenly Birth, rising out of the once-rejected
Earth. Behold! a Man, holy of Life, innocent in
Death; of Mouth and Spirit, without Guile; of Soul
and

and Body, without Sin. Lay Judgment to the Rule, and Righteousness to the Balance, O Heaven and Earth! nothing, with regard to either, that is wrong, will be found in him! All is streight for the Rule; all is in full Weight for the Balance. At this Sight, Righteousness not only looks down with Complacency, but comes down with Joy to meet the Truth and the Life in our Flesh; and there, finding Mercy and Peace, they all four knit together, and become one again in Love.

Thus we see how in CHRIST, and in him only, these great Attributes of GOD, which, by Man's Disobedience, were divided and set at Odds, are happily brought together again, and connected in that sweet Harmony, wherein they give Life and Blessing to all the Creatures of GOD. *Hosanna* then to the Son of *David*, who has made Peace in Heaven, and thereby restored Peace on Earth; and, in this blessed Temper, rejoined them for ever to each other! The Partition-Wall is by him broken down; Jew and Gentile may meet with Mercy and Peace, through his Righteousness; Law and Gospel are, by this our Peace-maker, made both as one; and Old and New Testament bind up together, and make but one consistent Volume, the History of GOD's wonderful and gracious Dealings with the Souls and Bodies of Men, from their first Formation, quite down to the blessed Consummation of all Things.

But now, *thirdly* and *lastly*, let me observe that these Divine Attributes must, in some Sort, meet in us too, through him, before the End of their Junction be completely answered. Remember then that Christians are the Body of CHRIST: He is our Head, and

we

we his Members; and there must be no Schism in the Body, if it hope to derive Health and Life from its Head. CHRIST's Birth brought Righteousness and Peace, Mercy and Truth, together; and the New Birth in him signifies the meeting of the same Virtues in us; he goes before, his Disciples follow; where he is, there must his Servants be also; for as he is, so are we to be in this World. Let then Truth be in us, in confessing and forsaking our Sins; which if we endeavour to cloke and cover, there is then no Truth in us; and Truth there must be in us, or no Hope of ever meeting with Mercy. See only how it works: *I have sinned*, saith David: *The LORD hath taken away thy Sin*, is Nathan's immediate Echo. In David's Confession stood Truth, and, in Nathan's Answer, Mercy gives her a ready Meeting. When this Truth of Confession springs freely from the Heart, which is the Deep of the Earth, to Self-condemnation, Righteousness shews herself immediately from Heaven to our Justification: And, God *be merciful to me a Sinner*, if sincerely pronounced, ever sends the Man home to his House justified.

Before this new and living Way was opened between Earth and Heaven, and Men were thus taught, through Penitence, to worship God in Spirit and in Truth, the whole World was overgrown with Idolatry, quite covered with a Mist of Error and Ignorance. The very Righteousness of the Law, to what Purpose did it serve but to condemn; for who can abide it? Nor did it ever get farther than the Top of Sinai, where it terrified to Death the Beholders. But now a new Sort of Righteousness, of quite another Make and Mould, is brought to Light; looking
down

down from Heaven, and which never saw the Earth, till the Truth of CHRIST, as revealed in the Gospel, invited it down amongst us. Let then all Mankind embrace it joyfully; it is calculated for Sinners, and fits us all. Confess and be punished, is a Maxim with Men; but confess and be saved, is the Sentence of God; whose Gospel is called the Gospel of Repentance, and requires nothing but Confession unto Salvation. There is such Force in the Sighing of a broken and contrite Spirit, as GOD in CHRIST can neither despise nor resist; such Truth in penitential Tears as will make Righteousness, through Mercy, spring up, and cover the Soul with everlasting Peace. Open in us, O gracious GOD, such a Sense of these Divine Truths, that we, thus knowing thee now by Faith, may, after this Life, have the Fruition of thy glorious Godhead, through CHRIST our LORD. To whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*



S E R.



S E R M O N VII.

MATTHEW ii. 6.

And thou Bethlehem in the Land of Juda, art not the least among the Princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my People Israel.



THESE Words of the Evangelist are a Quotation from the Prophet *Micah*, and the Application of an antient Prophecy of his to the Birth of CHRIST. The concurrent Testimony and Judgment of both Prophet and Evangelist, will give us assured Ground to raise our Doctrine upon.

But there is something so striking in the Manner of Expression as will be taken Notice of before we are allowed to proceed. The Prophet had been speaking of raising Armies and laying Siege to *Jerusalem*; and, all of a sudden, starts from his Subject, and, as from something of a higher Nature darting into his Mind, he breaks out with an *And* that has no Kind of Connection with his Matter in Hand; and, as to a living Creature, addresses himself to the Walls of another little

little Town hard by, thus in the second Person,—*And thou Bethlehem, to thee be it spoken, though thou art little among the Thousands of Juda, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me, one that is to be Ruler of Israel; whose Goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* This the Apostle, in the Text, applies to the Birth of CHRIST; and indeed there is no applying of it with Propriety to any other; for, from *David* to this Son of *David*, we read of none born there considerable enough to justify so astonishing an Exclamation; none, however, who had his Outgoings from everlasting; none of whom these Words can be verified, but of him who is the Son of the ever-living God.

The *Jews*, met in Council on the Occasion, all unanimously agree in this Point, so far as relates to the Birth-place. And the very common People, so notorious was this universally receiv'd, but mistaken, Opinion, could thus argue from it, That JESUS was not the CHRIST, because he was a *Galilean*, and so not born at *Bethlehem*, the Place the Prophets had assign'd for the Nativity of the *Messiah*.

This same Fact has still greater Witness; Witness from Heaven: For whither the Scriptures send us to look for the Saviour, thither did the Star direct, leading, without Stop or Stay, till it came and stood over *Bethlehem*, the Place where the young Child lay; saying, as it were, as well as pointing,—Lo, there was he born! And so scrupulously careful are the holy Penmen in this Point, that because there were two *Bethlehems*, one in the Tribe of *Zabulon*, as we read in the Book of *Joshua*, the other in the Tribe of *Juda*, the Prophet, by way of Distinction, calls it *Bethlehem-Ephrata*; but St. *Matthew*, in the Text,

Text, cites it in the Land of *Juda*: So that there can be no Error here. Besides, *Rachel's* Sepulchre was there hard by: And we are told by *Moses*, more than a thousand Years before, that she was buried by *Ephrata*, and that the same is *Bethlehem*.

This Matter, therefore, being now so well settled, I shall proceed to raise some truly Christian Doctrines upon it. And,

I. That of Humility: For tho' his going forth, with respect to Heaven, be from everlasting, yet, with respect to Earth, he comes forth from a Place of the poorest Account amongst the Thousands of *Juda*. And,

II. That of Obedience: For, notwithstanding the Meanness of his Birth, he is to be the Governor that must rule my People *Israel*; and of whose Kingdom there shall be no End.

First, then, for the Doctrine of Humility, to be raised from the Consideration of the Meanness of the Birth-place of CHRIST.

And, that our Foundation be the surer laid, let us collect all the Materials we can concerning this Circumstance. The Prophet speaks of it in Terms very diminutive, so little, that it was not to be reckoned one of a thousand; and the Evangelist makes it rather worse; he intimates that, before it was thus honoured, it was the least of all. However, little it was for the Compass of its Territory; little for the small Number of Inhabitants; little for the Thinness and Meanness of its Buildings, as was seen at the

very Time of this Birth-Day, it not being able to afford Lodging for its adjacent Neighbourhood. It was indeed, by all Accounts, a poor, little, sorry Village, and, according to our Manner of estimating Things, not worth the Prophet's Notice; especially unworthy to be greeted with a Salutation, distinguished with such Marks of Honour and Astonishment; and that too in the Presence of its Betters; when *Jerusalem* was before him, that famous City that had obtain'd the grand Addition of being the City of the Great King; who in his Senses, for such is our Manner of reasoning, would have dream'd that the Guide and Governor of the whole World, the universal Monarch, should have come creeping out of such an obscure Corner? The Birth of such an illustrious Personage is surely too big an Event for this contemptible Place! This is the Language and Judgment of Men; and in this self-same Spirit and Understanding the *Jews* were continually arguing, and making their Exceptions from the Unfitness of Places and Persons. Thus they were quite clear that no good Thing could come out of *Nazareth*; that out of *Galilee* could arise no Prophet; and that *JESUS* was not the *CHRIST*, because they knew the Names of his Brothers and Sisters; that his Father was called *Joseph*, and of no better a Business than that of a Carpenter. Such are the Thoughts of Man; such are the Dictates of worldly Wisdom: But the Apostle and Prophet saw these Things in quite another Light. As little as *Bethlehem* may be, out of it shall issue *He* that shall not only rule the Thousands of *Juda*, and the ten Thousands of *Israel*, but who shall lead and govern the whole *Israel* of God; the whole Congregation of the Faithful; all that are redeem'd from the Earth. The *Messiah* of the World was to be
born

born there; and his coming forth of it, makes it from the least to be the greatest and most famous of all the Dwellings of *Jacob*. *Thou art now no longer the least among the Princes of Juda, for out of thee shall spring Light to the Gentiles, and Salvation to the Ends of the Earth.*

It is Time to see now what may, without straining, be gathered from these Facts. In general, it is this—That God's Works are Wonders to Men; that he sees not as we see; that his Thoughts are not like our Thoughts; and that his Manner of dealing with the Children of Men is wholly above, and contrary to, our natural Conception of Things. Or, as *Mary* herself better expresses it on the Occasion, *He hath regarded the Lowliness of his Handmaiden; he hath put down the Mighty from their Seat, and exalted them of low Degree. He fills the Hungry with his good Things, the Rich he sends empty away.* And this is no new or strange Thing with God, though Men, taken up with themselves, regard it not; he forms, from the minuteest Principles, the most stupendous of his Works, and that both in Nature and in Grace, seeing it is the same God that works all in both. The wide-spreading and strongly-compacted Oak, wet with the Dew of Heaven, begins to spring from the Point of a little Kernel; the greatest among Herbs, from the smallest of all Seeds, the Grain of Mustard; and the most gigantick Productions of Nature, have their Original in a Principle scarce discernable.

So likewise in Grace; *Moses* the first appointed Law-giver and National Guide towards Heaven, whence came he? Even from a Basket of Bulrushes,

forlorn and floating among the Flags; a Child cast out of its Parents, and pick'd up, as it were, by Chance, a Foundling. *David* too, the Man after God's own Heart, and from whom, as concerning the Flesh, CHRIST came, was taken from the Sheep-Cot, as he followed the Ewes great with Young, according to his own Boast after he wore a Crown; and must be accouter'd in a Shepherd's Coat, Bag, and Scrip, before he be fit for God to work by him a strange Salvation. Four of the greatest Apostles, likewise the chief Pillars in the House of God, were called to this Ministry from a little Fishing Boat that they held in Partnership.

And all that ever shall be accounted worthy to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, must, in like Manner, take their Rise from Principles of the deepest Humility, and become as simple as little Children, before they can enter that strait Gate that leadeth to eternal Life; and our Blessed Saviour thanks God for having so appointed it. *I thank thee Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, and revealed them unto Babes; even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy Sight.*

Take then no Exceptions to the Littleness of *Bethlehem*, lest for so doing, you come to want the Saviour that was born there; little *Zoar* once saved the Body, and the Issue of little *Bethlehem* is that which saves both Soul and Body. *Contemn not the Day of small Things*, saith the Prophet, for all these are, as it were, God's Little-ones, and great Heed is to be taken that we despise them not.

But

But farther still, and to the same Purpose; CHRIST's Entrance into Life, and his whole State, during his Stay in it, was all mean and little, and every Circumstance of it points at nothing so clearly as to Humility: Not only the Place of his Nativity, but every Thing else was at its lowest Condition. The Time, the Depth of Winter, when the Days were at shortest, the State of the Nation near its Ruin; *Therefore, saith Amos, who shall raise up Jacob for he is small?* Never so low brought as at the Coming of CHRIST, being then under the Bondage of a Stranger, *Herod, one of the Children of Edom, whose Cry was, Down with it, down with it, even to the Ground;* one that made *Rachel* mourn in her Grave for the Slaughter of her innocent Children. If *Bethlehem* be little, what shall we say of the Inn, and the Stable, and the Manger? For thro' all these Scenes of Lowliness passed the Son of GOD, when he left the Bosom of the Father to enter into the human Life; and even all this was as nothing to the base Manner in which he went out of it. Such was his meek and lowly Deportment, as makes the Day of his Nativity a meer Feast-Day of Humility.

And how does this little *Bethlehem*, and this poor *Bethlehemite*, confound the Haughtiness of those who yet would be called Christians; nay, Representatives of CHRIST upon Earth! There is enough here before us to prick the very Heart, and let out that swelling Pride that gives the high Look and the proud Stomach; the lofty Gate and swelling Words of Vanity to all Mankind; whose Gesture and Carriage bespeak a Saviour born in State, and issuing in Pomp from some grand Metropolis, rather than from the little Hamlet of *Bethlehem*! But all these Instances of

Meanness were chosen by him to give Glory to Humility. He would hereby teach us to understand what Manner of Spirit we must be of to invite him down amongst us. This is the Pattern of the Birth from above, and all that hope to have him born again in them, must conform their Souls to this Original. Such is the Place of his Rest; *For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, to revive the Heart of the contrite ones.* To the Humble he gives Grace; to the Humble he reveals Secrets; and when, at the last Day, he shall appear in all his Glory, shall say, *Whatever ye have done kindly to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.* For Zion's Sake then, for she is low; for little Hermon's Sake; for little Bethlehem's Sake, love and follow that Virtue she represents; there is a Star over it, there is a Saviour in it: There is more Good comes to us out of that poor Town, than from the Opulence of all the great and glorious Cities of the World: It is the very Gate of Paradise; it gives us a Guide, who, if we will in all patient Humility follow, will bring us to our original Happiness, and fix us in it to all Eternity. And him we must follow in this Virtue, if we ever hope to come there.

This leads me to treat of Obedience, the *second* Doctrine I proposed to draw from the Circumstance of our Saviour's Birth, as set forth in the Text.

And here we are to consider his Person and Character. *His Goings forth, saith the Prophet, have been from Everlasting; and he is to be the Governor that*

that shall rule my People, saith the Apostle : So that the Birth we now celebrate, is by no Means to be looked upon as his Entrance into Being. Therefore there comes forth with the Root, as well as Offspring of *David*, a Star to shew that he had a more exalted and Heavenly Extraction. His Birth was indeed before the Morning Star ; from the Beginning, saith *John* ; from Everlasting, saith the Prophet ; when as yet there was no Time at all. This Person, so brought forth in Time and Eternity, is appointed, by the Decree of the Almighty, to be our Governor and Guide thro' both. He is to lead and guard us thro' Death into Life : And this implies a Duty in us to be led and governed by him. *He is become the Author of eternal Salvation*, saith *St. Paul*, *to all them that obey him* : Each Part of his Character, as God and Man, gives him a wonderful Fitness for this Office. He takes our Nature to assure us that he has a Feeling of our Infirmities, our Nature indeed is made up of little else. And this, according to Promise, *A Prophet shall the LORD GOD raise up unto you of your Brethren*, saith *Moses*.—*Their Governor shall proceed from the Midst of them*, saith *Jeremiah*. He is to be taken from amongst Men, that he may be ordained for Men, in Things pertaining unto God, saith the Apostle.

And he proceeds from Eternity, that he might be an unexceptionable Guide to that from whence he came ; and to which, by the well-known Way, he was soon to return : It is under this Notion that the whole Life of Man is considered, in Scripture, as a Journey, and he a Traveller, a meer Pilgrim ; and how must he wander without a Guide ? He knows

not so much as whither he is going, and how then should he know his Way? We stand therefore in great Need of a Guide, and an able one too.—The Way from Earth to Heaven is both dark and difficult; and were Mankind left to walk after their own Direction, few indeed would find it; there are so many Bye-ways, so many Cross-ways; and, which is worst of all, such a broad Way that leads to Destruction, that were we not, as the Prophet expresses it, to hear a Word behind us—*This is the Way, walk ye in it*, we should, by mistaking Right Hand or Left, be always wrong. And indeed to think we want no such Assistance, is the most dangerous Case of all; and yet such Confidence does this spiritual Blindness bring forth, that none are found more ready to offer themselves for Leaders of the Blind, than such blind Guides; and if they fall into the Ditch together, where is the Marvel?

But the Guide God has appointed for us is infallible; he is the very Way itself; a new and living Way, that speaks every Step we take; and by Spirit, Precept, and Example, ever going before us, guides our Feet in the Way of Peace. Let us then, with the Wise Men of the East, inquire first the Way to CHRIST; and, having learned it, immediately begin our Journey, never resting till we come to worship in his Presence; and let who will stay behind with the Scribes to hear their learned Descant and endless Lectures concerning the Way, without ever setting a Foot forward.

And as CHRIST, as our Guide, keeps us safe from Error, so, as our Captain, he defends us safe from

from the Danger of the Enemy ; scattering and dispersing every Opponent As from *Bethlehem* sprang he that fetched great *Goliath* to the Ground ; so from thence comes he forth that shall tread Satan under our Feet. He will likewise feed as well as guide and defend us in the Way ; and without which all would be short : If we faint by the Way, for Hunger or Thirst, Guidance and Defence will profit nothing. He is therefore set forth to us as a good Shepherd, that feeds as well as leads and protects his Sheep : He feeds them in a green Pasture, and leads them forth beside the Waters of Comfort. Be but obedient, and ye shall eat the Fat of the Land. Follow but the Lamb wheresoever he goeth, and ye shall find, both in your Journey, and at your Journey's End, assured Rest to your Souls.

To conclude : If we would be Christians indeed, let us first go and salute **CHRIST** in his Infant State of Humility in *Bethlehem*. Labour to be like him here, this is your Foundation ; the lower you lay it, the better it will bear what is to be built upon it. Here the poor Shepherds found him ; here the Wise Men found him ; here the Kings of *Arabia* found him ; and here every Creature must find him, whether High or Low, Rich or Poor, Learned or Ignorant, *Jew* or *Gentile* ; here they must all meet in **CHRIST**'s House of Humility, and there learn this Lesson of Meekness and Lowliness of Heart.

Strive to become little in your own Sight ; bear the Reproach of the World patiently, and never let the Sense of your Want of a Redeemer depart from you. To the Heart prepared obediently to follow
his

his Guidance, whensoever he is pleased to manifest himself, he is verily and indeed present; he is truly born there. His Humility then becomes your Humility; his Obedience your Obedience; in these Tempers is the Life of the Soul: And he to whom the Father hath given to have Life in himself, shall, thro' this Conformity of Spirit, open in you the Well-spring of Life Eternal.

And now, O Blessed JESU, who camest from Heaven to visit us in great Humility, and, as at this Time, to be born into our Nature, regenerate us, we most humbly beseech thee, into thine own; make us thy Brethren by Adoption and Grace; renew us daily with thy Holy Spirit, that so becoming the Children of GOD, we may be Heirs of Everlasting Life, thro' the same JESUS CHRIST our LORD. To whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-





S E R M O N VIII.

JEREMIAH xxxii. 40.

———— *I will put my Fear in their Hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*



Think it is not too bold an Assertion to say, That the Fear of God is, at this present Time, very much wanted amongst us; and that a Discourse, calculated to awaken and stir it up in us, will be no improper Thing. I shall therefore, without any farther Preface or Introduction, from these Words of the Prophet now under Consideration, fall immediately upon the Subject; and that under these three distinct Heads. Shewing,

I. That God hath put the Fear and Dread of Himself, and that for very good Purposes, upon the Minds of all Mankind.

II. That these Impressions are much defaced by Sin, which is both the Hardener and the Hard-
ness

ness of the Heart against the Fear of God.
And,

III. That there is Hope, notwithstanding that God will vindicate his Honour, that he will again open his Fear in our Souls, and not suffer us wholly to depart from him.

First, then, I am to shew that God hath put the Fear and Dread of himself upon the Minds of all Mankind. It is written there, as a Part or Principle in Nature, and belongs to that feeling Sensibility that is the very Life of the Creature: And accordingly there is something very dreadful in the Thought of the Almighty Power of the Great *Jehovah*! Who can speak Creatures into Being with a Word, and, with the same Ease, make them happy or miserable in every possible Degree: And were it not that, in the sweet Name of *JESUS* the Saviour, he becomes a most merciful Father, rather than an Almighty Creator, I see not how such a Creature as Man is could endure, when he appeareth in Power and Majesty only before the Eye of his Mind alone. *Shall not his Excellency make thee afraid, saith Job, and his Dread fall upon thee?* His Power considered alone, and separated from his Love which is in *CHRIST*, and in whom alone he is well pleased with his Creation, was ever dreadful, in former Days, to Mankind. *Fear ye not me, saith the LORD; will ye not tremble at my Presence?* At his Wrath the Earth shall quake, and the Pillars of Heaven tremble, and be astonished at his Reproof. Nay, his very Holiness, his Truth, his Righteousness, are all dreadful Considerations to Man in his Sins, who knows he shares in none of these Excellencies, and therefore has Reason to dread the Consequence of his Deficiency. He knows too, and is inwardly con-

convinced, that a Value for these Things is impressed upon his Mind, that he might fear this great and glorious Name—the LORD his GOD.

And this Dread is by no Means confined to the Righteous, but opens itself, at Times, in the Hearts of the worst of the Sons of Men who think at all. *I am a great King; saith the LORD, and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen.* This Dread of GOD breaks out from the very Deep and Centre of Nature, where the Creator's Power continually resides, and is itself the very hidden Life of the Soul.

As the Righteousness of the Law is impressed upon the Natures of all Men, (for indeed otherwise they could not become Sinners, nor can there be such a Thing as Transgression without such a Supposition) so the Being of a GOD is written upon their Hearts, and he hath a Witness in themselves, testified by their Consciences.

If the pretended speculative Atheists of the Earth were able to answer, ever so convincingly, all the Arguments from without brought to prove the Being of a GOD, which they are not, yet they can never satisfactorily confute the Witness of their own Conscience from within. If the Works of GOD do not, yet their Reins will both instruct and chasten them. If they will not see, whether they will or will not they shall feel, that there is a GOD. Even when their Mouth speaketh proud Things, their Hearts at the same Time shall meditate Terror; and, when nothing else is, they shall be a Terror to themselves.

And this inward Feeling and Fear is mightily increased by GOD's Works of Wonder that he shews
in

in the strange Discord and violent Concussions that are wrought by him in outward Nature. His Thunder and his Hail, his Wind and his Waves, his Earthquakes, and fiery Eruptions from the Bowels of the Earth: All these Threatenings of Destruction cannot but make the Heart shrink, were there no other Principle alive in it but that of Self-preservation, and out of which no Reasoning was ever able to argue any Man.

This Dread is still farther heightened by God's Judgments which he sometimes executes upon the Earth. These never fail to strike with Terror the Hearts of the most obdurate. Sudden Strokes shake the securest and most undaunted Understandings, by taking them unprovided, as it were, in the Absence of their Multitude and long String of Arguments that, at Times of no Danger, may support Infidelity. That such Things have happened, and consequently may happen again, I scarce believe any one is hardy enough to deny. Not only Sacred but Profane History is full of Relations of this Kind; and that in all Ages of the World, and every Country under Heaven, whose Acts are upon Record.

But still farther: Though a Man may argue himself into ever so great Security, at Times, against the Belief of a God, and the dreadful Consequences of offending him, yet there will still remain upon the Mind a fix'd Sensibility of Guilt, that will infer a Fear of Judgment, and which will spring up and do its Office of Terror, in spite of all our Reasoning to the contrary.

The Sin of *Judah* is written with an Iron Pen, and with the Point of a Diamond it is graven upon the
Table

Table of their Heart: And so is the Sin of the *Gentiles* too, their Conscience also bearing Witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing: And where Sin is so written, there Judgment is written in like Manner. And this same Inscription hangs, as a Label of Distinction, upon the very Nature of Man; and who can have Power wholly to erase or blot it out? The very Mention of Judgment to come, makes a *Felix* tremble at the Face of a poor Prisoner: This is the Terror of the LORD, mentioned by the Apostle. Death is said to be the King of Terrors, and this is the very Terror of Death, that after it surely comes the Judgment. All these together; the Impression of GOD upon the Heart; his Works of Wonder in the outward World; his Judgments upon Sinners; and an inward Sense and Feeling of Guilt, preach this Doctrine to the Heart in so forcible a Manner as not to be resisted, that there is a GOD that judgeth the Earth, and that it is a fearful Thing to fall into his Hands.

For the Benefit of those who respect the Authority of the Bible, I shall here add some Scripture Representations of this Matter, and with them conclude this Head. *The LORD thy GOD is a consuming Fire, even a jealous GOD, saith Moses.—Consider this ye that forget GOD, lest he tear you in Pieces, and there be none to deliver you, saith the Psalmist.—I, even I, will tear and go away, saith the Prophet Hosea.—I will tread them in mine Anger as the Mire in the Street, saith the Prophet Isaiah.* And the Consequence of these Threatnings has shewn that they were in earnest, and in no wise aggravated in the Expression. *Go to Jerusalem, go up to Mount Sion, go to Shilo, saith GOD, and see what I did to it!* Mark only

only in these Places the Monuments of God's Displeasure. Go down to *Sodom*, or look still deeper into *Tophet*, and behold the Terrors of the LORD there likewise. These Scenes of mighty Destruction, were there none other extant, one would think might be sufficient to make us cry out, *Who would not fear thee, thou King of Nations? Who can stand before thee when thou art angry! My Flesh trembleth for Fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy Judgments.* But notwithstanding all this, and much more that might be produced to the same Purpose, there is a certain Darkness and stubborn Stupidity in the human Mixture, that will help a Man, for a Season, to evade the Force of all these Admonitions. Which leads me

To the *second* Thing I promised to consider; where I am to shew how Sin, and nothing else, has Power to deface the Impressions of Dread, and harden our Hearts against the Fear of God: And in which single Point the Malignity of Sin chiefly appears.

Now, though Man be, by Nature, a most timorous Animal; and that in an exact Proportion to the Love and Value he sets upon himself; and though *Solomon* tells him 'tis well for him that it is so: *Happy is the Man*, saith he, *that feareth alway*, yet there is nothing he hates worse than to be told so; and the Imputation of Cowardice is the highest Offence that can be offered to his Reputation. He therefore does his utmost to conquer it; and what of this Kind he cannot get the better of, he labours, with all his Powers, to hide and dissemble. He struggles to shut the troublesome Feeling out of his Soul, and that indiscriminately, without any Regard

to

to the Object, whether GOD or Man. For which Purpose he strives to harden his Heart against both, notwithstanding it proves the most frequent Occasion of his falling into Mischief. Thus Hardness of Heart is Sin, and Sin is again the great Hardener of the Heart: They work one in another, one upon another; they mutually beget and bring forth each other, and, by this Means, grow up in Time to an astonishing Degree of Hardness and Impenitence, so as sometimes to make him weakly defy even the GOD in whose Hand his very Life is:

Thus Sin blinds the Eyes of the Understanding; hardens the Heart against Conviction; brings the Soul into Danger, and at the same Time puts out the Fear of it. Who is in such Danger, and yet who so bold, as the blinded Sinner? When the Understanding is darkened, the next Thing we read is past feeling. There is included in the very Name of Sin, a slighting of GOD; and, by frequent Repetitions of Acts of Contempt, an utter Disregard will grow. Slight the Commandment heartily, and you will soon despise the Curse thereunto annex'd: Laugh at the Duty, and you will soon come to mock at the Fear. And when Sin has hardened the Soul to this Degree, then GOD withdraws his Presence; leaves the Sinner to himself, to go on his own Way; smites him with judicial Blindness, and gives him up to a reprobate Mind. Then see what follows; he is filled with all Unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Covetousness, Maliciousness, Deceit, and Malignity of every Sort and Degree: And all this, because he has no Fear of GOD before his Eyes.

When *Abraham* entertained such a Thought, *surely the Fear of GOD is not in this Place*, he presently expects nothing but Murder and Adultery, and all Manner of inhospitable Violence. What sawest thou amongst us, say they, that thou harbourest such deadly Suspicion! I thought the Fear of GOD was not here, and there needs no more to make me afraid. Say of any one, the Fear of GOD is not in this Man, and it is immediately inferr'd that every Evil dwells in him. Say of any Place, the Fear of GOD is not here, and if it prove an *Egypt*, or a *Sodom*, for Abominations, there will be no Wonder. *The Fear of the LORD is clean*, saith the Psalmist, or is a cleansing Power; and where it is wanting, every unclean Thing may enter and abide.

The Reason why this World is so bad as it is; such a wicked, treacherous, deceitful, and vain World; why there is so little Faith or Truth, Mercy, Charity, or Sobriety to be found in it, 'tis because there is so little Fear of GOD in it. Sin hath cast out Fear, and the Want of Fear has again brought forth Sin in Abundance. Laws and Precepts signify nothing where this is wanting; Conscience is nothing regarded; Threatenings are pish'd at; GOD himself is as nothing, because his Fear is departed, the awakening Principle is gone out. Wickedness is as Righteousness; Knavery, as Honesty; Prodigality and Debauchery, as Temperance and Sobriety: The Light that should distinguish between Good and Evil is extinguished. Nay, under this Circumstance of mental Blindness, Evil has actually got the Start in Man's real Esteem of Good: It dares face the open Day; lifts up the Head, and wears the Garland; it paints itself Virtue, Generosity, Gallantry, Beauty, and Honour;

nour; 'tis become the Ornament of the World; the Basis of Business; the ready Road to Prosperity; the Ground of all social Happiness.

God may promise, threaten, or command; he may send his Servants, or his Son; it matters not: They may cry in his Name—Hearken to my Voice; turn at my Reproofs; cast away your Transgressions; awake from your Wine; be chaste; be sober; be humble; let your Merriment be turned into Mourning, your Jollity into Heaviness; remember your Creator; remember your Souls; why will ye die! Turn and live. God may speak thus, once or twice, and they may also hear the same, but it is nothing regarded. His Words have no Weight; his Counsels have no Credit; his Warnings are of no Value, where the Heart is hardened from his Fear by the Deceitfulness of Sin. Let the Tempter speak but once, he is heard; if Lust but whisper, there is silent Attention immediately given; If Avarice cry, Up, Up, the Summons is instantly obeyed; if a proud Mortal in Power do but nod, his Will is watch'd, his Motions are respected, whilst the redeeming Word of the God of Glory is made a Reproach, and his Servants a Scorn. Behold but the Actions of the World, and see, by their Deeds, which is the only Way of getting at the Truth of their Hearts, what utter Contempt they pour forth both upon God and Godliness! Do they not slight his Promises, and bid him, as it were, give his seven-fold Gifts, in all their Diversities of Power or Administration, to whom he will? His Grace and Glory, let him bestow it where he pleases: Let the World be but mine; let its Pleasures and its Honours, its Liberty and Security, be but in my Possession, and as for his Heavenly Kingdom, his Power, and Glory,

let him even share them, as he pleases, amongst those whose chimerical Fancies have led them to seek after invisible Matters, to be open'd in an unknown World to come; It was the Language of their Brethren in former Times, and therefore cannot be said to be a new Thing in the Earth, though it be an horrible Thing, Let the Day of the LORD come; let it hasten, that we may see it. Which is little otherwise, being interpreted, than let the Almighty do his worst, we will not hearken, nor turn from our determined Course. What a frightful Figure do a Man's Deeds make, when thus translated into Words: And yet such is the Blasphemy of every fearless and hardened Heart of Man: Thus the wicked Man blasphemeth GOD daily. But surely, as I purposed to shew,

In the *third* and *last* Place, GOD will not let Matters rest here. He will vindicate and recover his Honour; he will open his Fear again in our Souls, so as that we shall not wholly depart from him, if we resist not his Spirit. To think otherwise would make our Case even too desperate to be endur'd.

But the Prophet, in the Text, gives better Hope; and so does the Prophet *Isaiah*, when he expostulates with the Almighty in these strong Terms, *Why hast thou hardened our Hearts from thy Fear?* I cannot give a satisfactory Answer; but I can see a Door of Hope opened in the Question, that he will some Day arise; lift up himself with Strength; soften our Hearts; and subdue us to himself, if we will but suffer his Grace to operate. This seems to be the Psalmist's Expectation, when he calls out—*Be thou exalted, LORD, in thy own Strength, and so will we sing, and praise thy Power,* Indeed this Fear of
GOD

GOD includes more in it than we are aware of; Man is, by Transgression, become such a base Creature, as that nothing like Goodness can come into him, or out of him, by any other Passage; and till it please GOD, through the Mercy that is in his dear Son, to open this Way to the Soul, it cannot be help'd; all is close shut; all is fast sealed. And for this Reason we are bold to expect and hope for it, that he will not utterly forsake his People, nor shut up his Loving-kindness in everlasting Displeasure,

GOD, whose Name is gracious as well as great, surely will not let his poor Creatures perish finally for the lack of the Knowledge of himself, if they resist not his Call: Though he hide his Face for a Season, yet he will certainly return, and leave a Blessing upon the Soul, by lifting up the Light of his Countenance upon it. And we have a farther good Hope that it will be so, because of his Word; *for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*

If the Sense of GOD's Wrath was for ever to remain upon our Minds, our Punishment would be greater than we could bear, as said the first Murderer, *Cain*, when this Punishment was suggested to him, That he should be driven out, and hid for ever from the Face of GOD; and, upon this Remonstrance, some Remission is immediately declared. And surely, if there can be a Case, wherein it may be said to be better for any Man if he had never been born, it is this, when the Fear of GOD's Wrath is for ever present, and no Sense of his Love is ever vouchsafed to him. Better are the Fowls of the Air, or the Fishes of the Sea, than a Man from whose Heart the Sense

of his Maker's Love is for ever banish'd. Nay, better would it have been for him to have been made one of the vilest of Animals, and to have crawled over the Surface of the Ground in the detestable Shape of a Toad, or a Serpent, than be a Man without a God. For in this Circumstance his Peace is lost; his Hope is gone; his Comforts are at an End; and all the distinguishing and noble Faculties of the rational Mind, that are ever looking forward, and dipping into the Depths of Eternity, are deprived at once of every rational Object they should employ themselves upon.

What canst thou do for me, saith Abraham to the Almighty, seeing I go childless? But what can be done for the poor Soul that must go fatherless; who has lost his Heavenly Father, indeed the only Father a Soul knows how to acknowledge? This is the true Death of the Soul; this is the real Death of a Sinner: But since God is so gracious as to declare that he wills it not, there is Hope that so mighty a Destruction, so great a Death, shall not prevail for ever, if it be not our own Faults. CHRIST, in the utmost Extremity the Sins of the whole World could bring upon him, finds no fitter Expression for it than—*My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me!* Nor can Nature fall into a more desperate State than when it is constrained to say—*Where is now thy GOD!* except it be in an utter Insensibility of any Loss at all; which presents us with such a Scene of Horror, as the infinite Mercy of God forbids us to suppose, without some Hope of Redemption from it.

If,

If, O gracious GOD, I have gone beyond my Commission, in thus magnifying thy Mercy; if my Hope in this Representation has exceeded the Measure of thy Promises, in this Thing the LORD pardon his Servant. As thou hast promised to justify my Soul freely, so my Soul labours to justify thee; that thou mightest overcome when thou art judged; and that thou mightest appear righteous in all thy Ways, and holy in all thy Works, even as thou has shewn thyself in the sweet Mercy of thy dear Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD: And to whom with thee, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

SER-





S E R M O N IX.

PROVERBS xiv. 12.

*There is a Way which seemeth right unto a Man; but
the End thereof are the Ways of Death.*

SURELY a more desperate Mistake was never laid to the Charge of a Creature called Rational and Intelligent! To think it right to run into the Jaws of its most desperate Foe, the bitterest and last Enemy that shall be destroyed!—This is the Effect of such deadly Blindness, as is equally piteous and astonishing. Yet this mistaken Road went the great *St. Paul*, while he was a zealous *Pharisee*: *I verily thought, saith he, that I ought to do many Things contrary to the Name of JESUS*; and, in Truth, what could he have done more? He breathed out Threatnings and Slaughter, saith the Text; he was exceedingly mad against the Church; punished them oft in every Synagogue; compelled them to blaspheme; persecuted even to strange Cities,

Cities, not letting them rest so much as in their Banishment: And yet we hear this very *Paul* professing long after, *That he had lived in all good Conscience before G O D unto that Day.* Whence we may observe, That a Man may have a good Conscience, in some Sense; *i. e.* Sincerely think he is in the Right, and yet be, as *St. Paul* confesses he was, *A Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and Injurious.* And, strictly speaking, every Man that goes wrong, goes the same Way, thinking with himself that it is right. We can do nothing, till the Judgment be some-how drawn in to approve it; no Wickedness, however deadly or desperate, is indeed the Act of a moral Agent, till it have obtained the Consent of the Will; which is the same, whilst the false Impression lasts, as seeming right unto the Man.

The Manner in which the Judgment is thus strangely swayed and drawn aside, so as to mistake Wrong for Right, Darkness for Light, Bitter for Sweet, and the Way of Death for the Way of Life, shall be the Subject of the ensuing Enquiry; wherein the Ground of these astonishing Blunders in human Kind will, in some Measure, be opened and exposed to View.

I. The First Step that is usually taken in the Paths of Death, under the Semblance of the right Way, is by pretending the Instigation or Example of others.

II. The Second is, by palliating Sin, as little in Comparison of some of a more heinous Nature and deeper Dye. And

III.

III. By an humble Plea, drawn from the Frailty of the Sinner.

All, or indeed any of these, will do the Business effectually, in making that Way seem right to a Man, whose End, notwithstanding, is the Way of Death.

First, then, a Man will think himself in the Right when he is wrong, if he can but lay the Blame either on the Instigation or Example of others. As *Adam* put off his Transgression to the Woman, and she again to the Serpent; who, indeed, seems to have more Wit than either of them, and so says nothing. If we have not this to offer for Justification, then we plead Example. As if because *David* and *Peter*, and many other of God's Servants, have had their Failings, we also may do the like, and be Saints as well as they: Whereas we never consider with how great a Sum of Sanctity, both before and after their Fall, these lapsed Saints obtained Mercy of God to repent and live. Let us first be as holy as *David*, and as zealous Christians as *Peter*, and then we shall not dare design those Sins before-hand, into which they fell by Surprise.

But again: Sometimes we palliate with a Pretence of some Exigence that lies upon us: We create Necessities, and then think we have Reason to serve their Importunity. How frequently do we make ourselves Aprons to hide our Sin and Shame with such Fig-Leaves as these?

Thus the ambitious Man's Ways become right in his own Eyes, seeing he desires only not to be neglected

neglected; he is willing indeed to do some Good in his Time; and therefore only wishes to be somewhat considerable in the Place where he lives.

Thus the Covetous; he has great Charges upon him too, and Friends that must be provided for.

Thus the Fraudulent; he must live by his Business, and make the best of what he has.

Nor does the Prodigal want the Expensiveness of the Age, and the Necessity of doing like his Neighbours, to excuse his Profuseness.

Thus, if Men are proud and wanton, it is the Vanity and Heat of Youth that makes them so; if fretful and worldly-minded, it is old Age, no doubt, is the Occasion of it.

Now, all these Palliations and Shifts seem to be little more than Resolutions never to grow better, so long as we can but cheat ourselves, and have any Pretence left to grow worse.

And truly a Man must be very hard put to it if he cannot make a Shift to palliate the most ugly Sin under some Disguise or other. If it appear indeed in its true Colours, and with an open Face, it rudely affronts the Conscience, and we may haply bid it Defiance; but if it come in a civil Way, or with some artful Distinction, and so gain Time to dispute the Case, upon these Terms the Temptation is generally welcome, and it is ten to one but we fall before it; then it is all right, tho' the End thereof be the Ways of Death.

But

But, *Secondly*, another notorious Blind, by which we can make a Shift to impose Wrong upon ourselves, in the Shape of Right, is making light of the Sin we are inclined to, by comparing it with others of a deeper Dye, and to which, perhaps, we are not disposed.

Sin often recommends itself to Mankind under the same pretence as *Lot* entered into *Zoar*: *Is it not a little one, and my Soul shall live?* Whereas we are not competent Judges whether any Sin be great or little; tho' they are not all equal in themselves, yet they are all alike forbidden by God, and therefore all should be esteemed great by us. The least should, with all possible Care, be avoided, and the greatest can be no more. He that said, *Thou shalt not kill*, said also, *Thou shalt not bear false Witness*, or *take his Name in vain*: There is no Difference as to our Choice, where we are bound to refuse all. And therefore to compare them together before-hand, is to lay a Snare for ourselves, that so our Ruin may become our Choice, and seem right in our Eyes.

Indeed if the Case were so, that a Man must needs either slander his Brother, or murder him, Reason would that, of two Evils, of Sin as well as of Punishment, he should choose the less; but no Man is ever brought to that Necessity, for he may take the Consequence of doing neither; be it as it may, it is at worst but a small Matter, when weighed in the Balance with Life eternal.

Besides; our looking upon Sins as small, is the ready Way to make us familiar with them; and this, by Degrees, will make them encroach, and come

come thick upon us, till the Number at length more than countervail the Weight: Nay, a single Sin, tho' it may seem small in itself, yet as it is involved in Circumstances, which we are not always aware of, may become exceeding sinful: The Time and Place of its Commission; the Calling and Condition of the Offender, perhaps after former Pardon obtained and Grace received; these Aggravations will add such a Load to it, as may weigh us down to the Pit of Destruction.

We know likewise, that tho' long is the Train of Iniquity, yet some have longer Trains than others; and what ill and fatal Consequences some Sins draw after them, tho' they may seem at first but slight and inconsiderable. Hence we see vain Thoughts, idle Words, and passionate Expressions, as, *thou Fool*, and the like, severely condemned in Scripture; which one would have thought might have passed for Trifles, scarce worth such solemn Notice. Our Saviour has gone yet lower, and observed so minutely as upon the very Manner of our Salutations: *If ye salute your Brethren only*, saith he, *what do you more than others?*

Thus *David's* Heart smote him for an irreverent Touch of *Saul*, as well as for the Murder of *Uriah*; and *Paul* presently recanted, after he had let fall a mutinous Word against the High Priest, who had shamefully treated him, as knowing how great a Matter a little Fire, a very Spark, might kindle.

In a Word; Custom and Prejudice, Ignorance and Self-interest, and a thousand other Impostures, may turn us to the wrong End of the Perspective,
and

and make our Sins appear much less to us than they really are. *The Wages of Sin is Death*: Therefore nothing of the Kind ought, of Right, to seem little, since hereby so great a God is dishonoured; so holy a Commandment violated; and so precious a Thing as our immortal Soul endangered.

But there is another still more subtle, and consequently more dangerous Shift, by the Help of which most People find Relief, tho' walking in the Paths of Sin and Death; and that is the humble Plea I promised to treat, under my

Third Head, viz. The Frailty of the Sinner. And as this is the most universal Quieter of a guilty Conscience, and the Shield that almost every one holds up to defend them from the Power of Conviction and Conversion, I shall therefore employ the more Time and Diligence in detecting and exposing it. Now there is nothing more frequent than to call those Sins to which Nature inclines us, though, by Carelessness and evil Custom, we have made them habitual, by the Name of Sins of Infirmary: And to this Men think they have Reason to pretend, if, when they have committed a Fault, their Conscience checks them, and they are troubled, and for a while resolve against it; but yet readily repeat the same again, when Appetite and Opportunity make a fresh Demand: Then they cry out against the Weakness of their Nature; and think that so long as they are in the Body, it must needs be thus; and that this Condition may consist with Grace and Regeneration. What charitable and easy Casuists are we, when our own Cause is trying!

There

There are, it must be confessed, many Conditions of this wretched human Life, that more especially require our Godly Fear and Circumspection. The natural Inclination of our Temper; the evil Custom of the Place we live in; the Propensity of Youth to Wantonness and Shew; of Age to Coveting and Forwardness; the Tendency that Poverty has to Envy and Discontent; of Riches, to Pride and Extravagance: These, no doubt, are States of Danger and Temptation; What State of Trial is not so? But the Sins that follow from them, are not imputable to Infirmary: They call upon us to shut up our Gates, and set our Guards the stronger; but if we refuse to do so, and the Enemy enter, Destruction is from ourselves, and our Fault is without Excuse; the prevailing Strength of the Temptation stood wholly in our Love of the Tempter. It cannot be denied, but that every Sin is in some Sort a Sin of Infirmary: When a Man is spiritually sick, or perhaps dead in Sin, he is then without Strength; he is weak in his Reasonings; impotent in his Passions; no Courage or Conduct in his Resolutions: But this is so far from excusing, that it aggravates his Sinfulness. *His inward Parts, as David speaks, are become very Wickedness*; he has sold himself as a Bond-Slave to Iniquity, and is become a Vassal to Sin and Death, and that for ever too; for the very Principle of Health is departed, unless the Spirit and All-sufficient Grace of God shall please to set him free, and restore him to the Service of Righteousness.

There are indeed Sins of Infirmary more properly so called; but these are not habitual, they are only single Actions, not the same committed over and over again, but irregular and accidental, surprizing

us, for the most Part, thro' Inadvertency, or a blameless Ignorance. Such are always the Allays of the most upright Conversation, and may justly hope to be forgiven for his Name's Sake, who is our Advocate with the Father; and because, whilst we are here in the Body, there is no fencing against them: They come like Motes into our Eyes, not to be discerned till felt; whilst the others, like Beams, are easy to be seen, and it is our own Fault if we dash ourselves upon them.

But the Misfortune is, there is scarce any, even of the most profligate Sinners, but is ready to rectify the Ways of Death, with this Plea of human Frailty, and make them seem right unto himself. Yet, if we look but ever so little into ourselves, we shall find our own Practice every Day confute such Pretences. We can rise early, and watch late, only to procure what we must one Day lose. We can wait, and sawn, and stoop, to advance ourselves: Nay, the tenderest Persons among us can deny themselves, and suffer many disagreeable Things—Fasting, and Exercise, and Physick for their Health's Sake, or perhaps on a slighter Occasion. But when God comes to look for his own, and commands us for our own Good, to lay any Restraints upon ourselves, then natural or customary Weakness must plead our Excuse.

There is no one Sin I know more apt to surprize us than Anger, nor any that more usually pleads for Indemnity upon the Account of human Frailty: Yet what Man is there that has so little Command of himself, but he can bridle this Passion towards his

Ruler, and not be peevish in the Presence of him that can crush him with a Word?

Again: No Man will deny but that he can live soberly, when a solemn or serious Business takes up his Time and Thoughts: Why then may not a wise Man and a true Christian lay these Restraints upon himself, and turn the casual Exigences of a few Days into the voluntary and constant Practice of his Life? Every Man can forbear a Meal when he pleases; why then can he not more easily forbear Excess? Yet Appetite and the Necessity of Life prompt him to the one; nothing but Nauseousness and a repeated Violence to Nature accompanies the other.

Much less I think any Man has a Right to pretend that it was not in his Power to withhold his Hand from a Robbery or Murder; or that he could not refrain his Tongue from Perjury, Slander, or Profaneness. Were we strictly to consult our own Conscience, I am persuaded we should find no Temptation that did so irresistibly assault us, as to leave no Way to escape. The Help of that Grace which God has already given, or would have given, had we asked for it in the Hour of Danger, would be sufficient to dull or divert the sharpest Weapon of the Adversary, were we not guilty of wilful Cowardise, in betraying the Strength which God, of his free and undeserved Goodness, offers to our Hands.

Certainly if mere natural Reason, and the Persuasions of Philosophy, have sometimes advanced human Abilities, so far as to keep many a brave Heathen

Heathen within the Bounds of Sobriety and Virtue; why should any of us despond? Grace and Power hath much more abounded through CHRIST. We have the Promise of inward Succours from a Divine Spirit; and the outward Assistance of those Angels, that are purposely sent forth, saith, *St. Paul*, to minister to those that are Heirs of Salvation: More Auxiliaries, and mightier Helpers, than all the Powers of Darknes that can make Head against us.

St. Paul indeed speaks of a Man unregenerate, wholly alienated from the State of Grace; which, by way of Figure, he transfers to his own Person: *The Evil that I would not, that I do; and when I would do Good, Evil is present with me.* But what is all this to a real Christian, to one who has put on the Mind of him, over whom Sin hath no Dominion? Tho' the Flesh be weak, the Spirit is Power, and with it our inward Man is renewed with Strength, Day by Day; nor will GOD suffer us to be tempted above what he will enable us to bear. Such a one can plead no Want of Power, or charge the Blame of his Miscarriages any where but upon himself for not acting up to it. Let him that is weak gird up tighter the Loins of his Mind, and he will soon find that a Sense of Weakness, so treated, will add Strength to his Faith, and Seriousness to his Repentance: But all these Pretensions of Weakness and Infirmary, are an errant Cheat, and scarce deserve a serious Answer.

Does it not evidently appear to be no better from this single View? For tell a Man that his Constitution is strong; that his Parts are lively, active, and vigo-

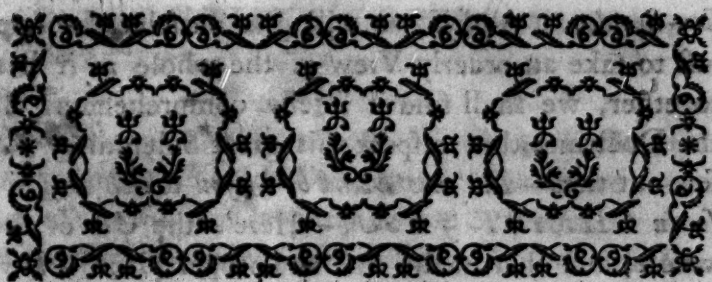
rous, and he will give you the Hearing gladly: Tell him farther, that he is wise and dexterous in Business, and may soon become as Rich and Great as he pleases: So far all is well, and your Opinion finds an hearty Welcome from within: But say that he may subdue his Appetites, become Just, Honest, and Pious, if he would but exert himself; and that God will enable him to work out his own Salvation, if he will only employ his Talents, and bend his Faculties this way-ward; herein it is the cheaper Way not to believe you, and he chooseth rather modestly to acknowledge his own Weakness and Inabilities. Nor is that other specious Plea, drawn from the Strength of Temptation, one bit better grounded than this from Infirmary: It is little more than saying, We love the Sin too well to which we are tempted, to offer it an hearty Resistance. And if this be the Case, we have no Room to complain but of ourselves; for he that would not betray CHRIST for ten Pieces of Silver, and yet sells him for thirty, might have been innocent in both, if he acted from a true Principle in either: He only here shews you what Degree of Vanity he prefers before eternal Life: He sets, as it were, his Price upon Heaven, and does as good as tell you, at what Rate he thinks his Soul worth the losing.

Such, and such like, are the weighty Reasons that bias the Mind of Man, and make that Way seem Right unto him that ends in Death.

But to conclude: The Knowledge of ourselves had need be useful, for it is both difficult to get, and irksome when obtained; the more we look, the worse we like. And were it not necessary to open in us
a Sense

a Sense of the Want of a Redeemer, a total Ignorance would be the more eligible Condition. The Law of every Creature is its Nature, and had Man no latent Principle of Goodness in him, condemning him for the Want of exerting it, it would be as absurd as impeaching a Beast of Prey for lack of Pity, or a Swine for Want of Taste in Delicacy. But Man's Nature is become a Mixture of Good and Evil ; and what subjects him to Condemnation, is his preferring the Evil before the Good ; and what leads him to this false Judgment is no more Weakness than it is Strength.

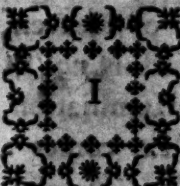
There are, however, no Christians but have, at Times, had holy Thoughts and pious Resolutions : Intervals of Sobriety or Danger cast a Value upon the Soul, and Abhorrence upon Sin. Now these Things are still the same, only the Case is altered with ourselves : Yesterday we gathered up our Thoughts, and listened to the Dictates of Goodness : To-day we let all loose again, and give up ourselves a Prey to our vilest Affections. And if any Thing can add to the Folly and Danger of such Behaviour, it is an Endeavour to cover it up with the Mantle of Infirmary. But, O gracious GOD, deliver us, we beseech thee, from the bad Part of ourselves ; and so cleanse our Hearts by the Inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, thro' JESUS CHRIST our LORD ; to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*



S E R M O N X.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 9.

Wherefore GOD also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name.

 I will be necessary here, in order to get at a full and clear Comprehension of the entire Meaning of these Words, to look backwards and forwards into the Context. Both what goes before and what follows after will serve to throw much Light upon them. Indeed, from the 5th to the End of the 11th Verse of this Chapter, all treats in the strongest Manner of the Resurrection of CHRIST. Herein we meet with a most exact Delineation of his Sufferings, together with the Glory that should follow, and what ought to be to us the Consequence of both. The Passage, taken together, forms so complete a Piece, that our Church has judiciously placed it, as it were, at the Head of this Holy Season, by making it the Portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle on Pas-
sion.

from Sunday. And if we will give ourselves Leisure
 just to take an orderly View of the whole as it lies
 together, we shall find it briefly comprehending all
 the Doctrines that respect this great Solemnity. It
 sets out thus—*Let this Mind be in you which was al-*
so in CHRIST JESUS—Here's the Use of the
 whole, and that in the first and proper Place,—*Who*
being in the Form of GOD, thought it not Robbery to
be equal with GOD—Here's the Point of Dignity,
 from whence his infinite Condescension is wonder-
 fully set forth;—*But made himself of no Reputation,*
and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was
made in the Likeness of Men. Whoever has obtain'd
 the Knowledge of our corrupted Nature, would be
 astonished at this Point of Condescension, to say no
 more: But the Apostle goes on; *and being found*
in Fashion as a Man, he humbled himself, and became
obedient unto Death, even to the Death of the Cross.
 Astonishing Instance of Humility, to be brought
 down from an Equality with the GOD of Heaven,
 to be hang'd up upon a Post as a Malefactor, not fit
 to live upon the Earth! Here ends his Humiliation.
 Indeed Humility can go no further. Next comes a
 like amazing Contrast of Exaltation; *Wherefore*
GOD also has highly exalted him, and given him a
Name which is above every Name. This is the Re-
 ward of Humility from GOD; and he is pleased to
 call in next the whole Creation on the same Ac-
 count, and for whose Benefit the Scheme was
 purely form'd, to join in the Glorification of his Son—
That at the Name of JESUS every Knee should bow;
of Things in Heaven, of Things in Earth, and of
Things under the Earth; and that every Tongue should

confess that CHRIST is LORD, to the Glory of GOD the Father.

It is not in the Power of Words to finish any Thing higher than this Description, whether we consider the exquisite Deepness of the Suffering, or the transcendent Grandeur of the Reward; but thus set against each other in one View, it perfectly puts the Soul to Pain, by over-stretching its Faculties, to comprehend it. Such is the sweet Mercy of GOD in CHRIST towards us.

In my following Discourse I shall treat them separately, speaking

I. Of our Saviour's Humiliation, *wherefore GOD hath also highly exalted him.* Then,

II. Of the Exaltation itself; *He hath given him a Name which is above every Name.* And then,

III. Conclude with an Exhortation to let the same Mind be in us also, that the Benefit of all this may finally rest upon us. And,

First, I am to speak of CHRIST's Humiliation; the *wherefore GOD hath so highly exalted him.* This indeed is the Point upon which the whole Transaction turns. The GOD of Wisdom does nothing without a proper Cause; and Humility, it seems, is the Almighty's Reason for Exaltation. His rational Creatures here upon Earth are not found in the Image of their Creator in this Particular: And tho' they may have their Reasons for what they do in this Kind, yet I think Humility was never with them

con-

considered as the Fountain or Foundation of Honour. It is the presumptuous Claimant; that pushes his Fortune and pleads boldly his Merits, that is the likeliest to reach this Point. And if Virtue be allowed to lead to Greatness, yet of all others, it was never the Virtue of Humility: A Virtue, before CHRIST gave it Grace and Reputation, in so little Request, as that the Philosophers scarce give it so much as a Name, in all the long List of moral Virtues they had discovered in human Kind.

But, notwithstanding, this rejected Virtue, of such poor, or no Account amongst Men, is by GOD, who seeth not as Man seeth, made the only Reason of CHRIST's Exaltation. As Things that are highly esteemed amongst Men, are an Abomination in the Sight of GOD; so, on the contrary, the Things that are most despised of the World, are of the greatest Price in the Sight of our Maker; from whose Judgment, of Good and Evil, we are so far departed, as that our very Wisdom is not only become Folly before him, but very Enmity against him.

But that GOD, who at the first brought Light out of Darkness, will, before he finish his stupenduous Work, bring Glory out of Humility, or else there is some desperate Mistake runs quite thro' this whole Book called the Bible; which, like the Magnificat, almost wholly turns upon this Expectation.—*He hath regarded the Lowliness of his Hand-Maiden.* But to look a little more closely into this Matter; there being not a single Word in the whole Account here before us but what bears its Testimony to this Truth, and adds Beauty and Strength to the whole Description.

And

And, first, That he should humble himself, so great a Person; this is a Circumstance of great Weight. He who being in the Form of God, and, without any Disparagement at all, equal with God; even He humbled himself, and that in the tenderest Point to a generous Mind, so as to become of no Reputation. This gives a great Lustre to the Humility; for one of mean and low Degree to be humble, carries no great Praise with it: There must be a sad Mistake, a Fault indeed, if such a one were not so. But for a King *David* to say,—*I will be more humble*: Here we begin to admire. What then shall we say when the King of Kings brings himself down beneath either of these Instances? This is quite astonishing to us Men, whose Notions of Honour are quite of another Fashion.

But farther: He was not brought to it by any Act of Violence or Compulsion; he humbled himself. There is a very wide Difference between humbling, and being humbled: A Man may be the one, and, at the same Time, far distant from the other. *Pharoah* was brought down by his ten Plagues, and *Simon of Cyrene* bowed his Neck, when compelled to bear the Cross; but here was no true Humility in either of them, because it was all Constraint. True Humility is that which bowes itself; that which is voluntary, and of a willing Mind.

A still farther Proof of the Greatness of CHRIST's Humility is shewn in his doing all this out of Obedience: *He became obedient*. There is a Kind of Humility which the World approves, because Pride is most neatly covered and wrap'd up in its Mantle. Of this Sort was *Absalom's*; made up of Shew and
Com=

Compliment, Kissing and Bowing ; whilst they served to the Purposes of Ambition, Disobedience, and Rebellion against his King and Father. But it is not humble Courtesy, but humble Obedience that commends to God.

But farther than this : The very humble Obedience receives an Addition, in that he submitted to be made obedient. Sometimes there springs, from the Dictates of natural Reason and Prudence, a Kind of Disposition to obey : But the highest Form of this Virtue is, when the Obedience issues from the Injunction of a superior Power ; and when the Will yields itself into it, on that Consideration and none else. *This Commandment*, saith he, *have I received of my Father* ; and therefore he readily and willingly obeys.

But now we come to consider how far this Obedience went, it will rise still higher in our Esteem. Many will obey, with *Saul*, and destroy, when they are bid, all that is Vile and Refuse, that which they scarce care what becomes of : But the Instances of Obedience CHRIST yielded a ready Submission to, seem judiciously and studiously sought out for him, purposely to cross every Thing that was tender and desirable in Nature ; and all to try and prove in him the utmost Extent, the farthest Lengths, to which Humility and Submission can possibly be drawn forth. He verily took on him the Nature of Man, and considering what a base and ill-conditioned Wretch Man was, thro' Sin, become ; to have Purity and Holiness itself take such a Manhood into God, is marvellous Condescension, had it went no farther. But he took on him the Form of a Servant, even down to the Office of washing his Disciples Feet, and so becomes

comes a Servant of Servants; *I am among you, saith he, as he that doth serve.*

But when he carries this Obedience to Death, think with yourselves what an ugly Feeling the Thought of a violent Death, so circumstanced as his was, must produce, and it will even stagger the Understanding to conceive it possible! Made obedient to Death, and made guilty of it too; made Sin, when as he knew no Sin, that he might receive these worst Wages of it!—Were a mere Man to be treated in this Manner, he would make Heaven and Earth ring of the Injustice, as well as Cruelty: But CHRIST's Obedience reached beyond the Love of Life, which he willingly submitted, in this Manner, to forego. And surely he can carry it no farther! Why, yes, a Step still more. For, as one violent Death is worse than another, what he was to submit to was to be the worst of all: The Death of a Malefactor, and that of the most vile and abject Malefactor; the Death of the Cross! If he must be obedient to Death, surely he might have been permitted to lay down his Life in as fair and decent a Manner as is consistent with Violence! But it seems even this Favour was not to be granted; it would have left some Point of Sufferance, wherein another might have exceeded him, and that must not be: It became him, as Captain of that Salvation which springs from Humility, to be made perfect, by suffering to such a Degree, as that none of his Soldiers that follow him can have it to say, They have gone beyond their Master; or that they have felt any Grievance for which they have not him before them for an Example.

These

These Things, thus aggravated, make up a compleat Body of Sufferings; and it must have been as compleat a Humility that willingly submitted to go thro' them: Infomuch as that his Title to the Exaltation has been purchased with a valuable Consideration; and is none too much, tho' God *highly exalt him, and give him a Name which is above every Name*: And which comes now under my

Second General Head to be explained and enlarged upon.

And here let us, in the first Place, take Notice what an exact Conformity is observed by the Apostle in the Degrees of the Humiliation and the Proportion of the Exaltation. Over against the Humbling, is set Exalting. In answer to the *He*, there is *GOD*: For that he humbled himself so greatly; here is an Exalting as highly. For becoming obedient, he is made the *LORD* to whom every Knee shall bow: And over against the infamous Death of the Cross, stands the Glory of God the Father.

This has more Meaning in it than a bare Antithesis, or quaint Figure of Speech.

God's Rewards in Spirituals, as well as his Works in Materials, are all according to an exact Proportion, in Number, Measure, and in Weight. God exalts him from the worst of Death, to the best of Life; from the Deep of the Earth, to the highest Heavens; from the greatest Shame, to the utmost Glory; from an obedient Servant, to be the *LORD of All*; from standing before a mortal Judge, as a Criminal, to be the Judge both of Quick and Dead;
and

and from standing to be smitten by Servants with the Palms of their Hands, we find him set down at the Right Hand of God ; and no higher can we go. It may be here worth our Notice, to see only what a Similitude of all this was acted over upon Earth, by the Sons of Men, upon the Person of the Son of God. They too will exalt him from his Humiliation ; but it is to the Height of the Cross : Thus they lift up the Son of Man, that all the World might see and revile him.

They lift him up in the Manner the *Philistines* did *Sampson*, between the two Pillars, to make Sport at him : And they gave him a Name likewise, *Pilate* wrote the Title, and put it over his Head ; nay, to carry on the horrid Farce, and, give it a Finishing, they, in Mockery, bow the Knee before him, and cry,—*Hail King of the Jews !* O gracious God, How canst thou away with the Sins of Men ! How is it that thou art not tired with pardoning ; and that the Bowels of thy Mercies are not restrain'd towards such a Creature as this !

God and Man seem here tugging for Victory at the Person of CHRIST ; the lower they strive to bring his Son down, the higher he exalts him ; the more odious they sought to make him, the more God glorifies him ; Men lift his Body to the Cross, and God lifts his Person into the Throne of his Majesty ; and, instead of *Pilate's* Title, gives him a Name above every Name, above all the Titles in Heaven or in Earth ; a Name to which every Knee shall bow in both : And, at his Resurrection, he begins to take Possession of it ; so that, on this Day, we cele-

celebrate the first Fruits of his Exaltation ; his Resurrection being, as it were, his Nativity in Glory.

And so St. Paul, in the *Acts* of the Apostles, applies that Verse in the *Psalms*,—*This Day have I begotten thee*. And so likewise, with regard to all those that are his Members, they are the Children of God, being the Children of the Resurrection: And till this Change come, we must wait, in Faith and Patience, for the Completion of all the glorious Promises of the Gospel, even as our Master did. Now this Mark of high Exaltation ; this Name given, *at which every Knee shall bow, whether in Heaven or Earth, or under the Earth*, is no other than the blessed Name of Jesus. And because it may be supposed that the full Meaning of it is not apprehended by every one that bows to it, I shall here rest a while upon it, that we may both bow and pray to it with better Understanding. Observe then, that tho' this Name was common to many, as we read in Scripture, yet it was given only by Men, and not by God himself, but by the Message of an Angel, as significant of some special Dignity. All that ever bore this Name, without the Virtue signified under it, for Name and Nature mean the same with God, must, as all others, lay hold on the Skirts of CHRIST to be saved, or else perish everlastingly.

But be this so ; yet how can it be said to be given to him at the Resurrection, when it is elsewhere declared, that he was so named before he was conceived ? *Known unto GOD are all his Works from the Creation* ; but, with regard to us Creatures of Time, it had not its full verifying till this very Day.

Not

Not full three Days before they upbraid him with it, and cast the same in his Teeth,—*He saved others, himself he cannot save!* He seemed to perish in their Sight. But when he takes his Life again, and shews, by this Act, that he did but lay it down, and lost it not, then he beomes truly, compleatly, JESUS; that is, *Able to save himself, and all those that come unto him for Salvation.* For this is the Sense of the Word, and when applied rightly to him, is always with Power. And, O JESU, *esto mihi JESUS*; which is, being interpreted, ‘O Saviour of the World,’ has more Meaning in it, than all the Words in the World besides.

But how is this Name said to be above every Name? Surely it is not above the Name of GOD! We may here answer with the Apostle, *It is manifest he is excepted who gave it.* But we need not this; it is the most glorious Name of GOD himself: *I am, faith he, and besides me there is no other Saviour.* This is a Name above all others, when applied to GOD, and to us the most highly precious: For tho’ the Title of Almighty Creator may sound more glorious in Power; yet that of Almighty Saviour, is more expressive of his Goodness; and he hath exalted his Compassion and Mercy above all his Works.

And it is on this Name of GOD we dare alone trust and hold; *there being no other Name under Heaven given, whereby we can be saved.*

What indeed would Creation, without Redemption, have been, but a ruined and ill-finished Business?

VOL. I.

I

But

But since GOD, thro' CHRIST, hath reconciled the World unto himself, and which is, without him, at Enmity with their Maker, there springs up hence, thro' this Word of Reconciliation, some Comfort to Mankind in the Name of GOD: But without it there was none; our GOD was a consuming Fire.

And this is the true Ground why all our Prayers to GOD are terminated with it. It is in his Name we ask with Confidence; and it is for his Name's Sake that we receive with Assurance: The Promise, *That when two or three are gathered together, GOD will grant their Request*, is purely upon Condition that they are gathered together in his Name; nor is there Redemption or Acceptance in any other. All we can hope for from GOD, all we want, all we wish, and all we can receive, must be through the ever-blessed Name and Merits of JESUS CHRIST our LORD. And when the whole Creation bows to, and obeys, this highly exalted Name, with this Spirit and Understanding, they truly come under the Favour, and are real Partakers of the Glory of GOD the Father.

Here I drop naturally into

The *Third* and *last* Thing I promised to conclude withall, and which will be dispatched in a very few Words.

Let me then here exhort all those that hope and trust in this ever-blessed Name, for their future Exaltation in Glory, that they be careful now that the same Mind be in them, that was also in him, with respect to the Humiliation, for they never can be severed

severed. And so God has provided, as the Apostle witnesseth, *that all that will live godly in CHRIST shall suffer Persecution.* Remember that it is having the Mind of CHRIST that makes us Christians; and no outward Name or Ceremony whatsoever: Neither will calling him *LORD, LORD, without doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven,* ever gain us Admittance there: CHRIST's Obedience, as we have just now seen, to his Father's Will, was without Reserve, and without Exception; and so must ours also be, whenever it pleases GOD to call us to the Trial. This Mind of CHRIST can never be established in us, but by walking in the Way that he walked, and his Path was Humility; nor can any Thing turn our Feet into it, but a Participation of his meek and patient Spirit: This is the Lesson therefore he calls upon us to learn of him; and by his Example, as well as Precept, the Instruction is full before us.

Comfort yourselves hence, under all your Sufferings here upon Earth; and let Patience have its perfect Work in bringing forth Humility.

Fight manfully the good Fight of Faith, and then boldly expect the Crown of Righteousness.

But where there is no Cross borne, there is no Crown in reserve: They grow out of each other by an eternal Establishment of the GOD of Order.

Humble thyself therefore, and thou shalt be exalted, the LORD will never fail his People; thou art passed from Death unto Life. And, O blessed LORD

GOD, who, of thy special Grace, dost put into our
Minds these good Desires, bring the same to good
Effect, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to
whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed,
&c. Amen.

SER-





S E R M O N XI.

EPHESIANS ii. 10.

*We are his Workmanship, created in CHRIST
JESUS unto good Works, which GOD hath
before ordain'd that we should walk in them.*

T. Paul here, in these Words, presents us with a new Creation; a second Workmanship of the first Creator of all Things. The Occasion likewise of his taking this Work in Hand, after his Rest from his former Labour, is here set forth: What he had before created and ordained to good Works, had fail'd in this Point, and walk'd not in them; he therefore, for the same good Purpose, creates them a-new in CHRIST JESUS. I own this new Creation, placed in this Light, reflects very hardly upon the old one, as utterly incapable of any Goodness at all, till made and fashion'd over again, according to the Image and Form of the eternal Son of the Father: For if the old Man could have answered God's Purposes, what Room could have been found for making a Second? But the Incapacity

of the one, and Necessity of the other, is the Subject of the whole Bible Revelation. And indeed Christianity supposes as great a Difference between the Creatures of this present evil World, and those new Creatures that are, by a second Operation of the Divine Power, begotten and born from above, as there is between the Living and the Dead. Nay, those only who are dead indeed to the sinful World, are accounted capable of being made alive unto God thro' JESUS CHRIST. We see here from all this, that there is a Change of Nature pointed at ; such a Change as a Creature passes through, who is made to live and breathe in a different Element from that in which it was at first form'd. This the Insects, whether of the Earth or the Water, may serve to give us an Idea of, who change, together with their Bodies, their Element, and, from creeping in the Mire, obtain Wings, and fly away towards Heaven.

Heavenly-minded and earthly-minded People are look'd upon, in a Scripture-light, as Creatures of two different Worlds, both with regard to Extraction, Taste, and Sensibility. Their Goods and their Evils are all quite revers'd ; their Hopes and their Fears excited by quite different Objects, insomuch that they become utterly unintelligible to each other ; nor can ever be reconciled or brought to an Understanding, till this new Creation in CHRIST has done its Office on them, and publish'd them, as it were, in a new and better Edition.

So that the Change Christianity makes, is not to be consider'd as a bare relative Change, as Justification and Adoption are held to be ; but an Alteration of the very Essence and Substance of the Soul.

Any

Any Thing short of this is meerly outward and superficial; 'tis but like washing away the Filth from the Skin of the Flesh, and leaving Lust to do its Office in the Muscles, Blood, and Marrow. What is here wanted to make us the Children of God, is the Change of the Man, and that Name belongs to the Life and Spirit, Reason, and every other intellectual Faculty, as they are now held and bound up together in the Body of the Flesh: And in the Necessity of such a Change as this we may see plainly the whole Will of God concerning us. We at any Time learn best wherefore Things are, by understanding what they are; and therefore it is that the Study of ourselves is made so necessary a Branch of our Knowledge. God's Expectations from us are best read in his Operations upon us. We may gather much Understanding of the Work we are required to do, by observing what God hath wrought upon our Hearts; for he doth nothing in vain, nor will he act towards us as an unreasonable Taskmaster. As then God, by making Men living Souls, does by that very Act tell us, that he expects other Things from them than from dead Stocks and Stones; and as in making them reasonable Souls, he farther intimates that they should live other Sort of Lives than mere Brute Beasts that have no such Understanding; so likewise in making Men Christians, that is, Partakers of the Nature of CHRIST, he makes it equally evident that they should live a heavenly Life, above the Pitch of the mere natural Man.

In pursuing this Subject, for the Sake of Order, I shall cast what I have farther to advance upon it, under these three distinct Heads:

I. I shall shew that God has intended us for the Practice of good Works, because he has, in CHRIST, fitted us for them.

II. I shall shew what those good Works are which our Christianity is to bring forth. And then,

III. I shall exhort all those that have happily begun, to persevere therein to the utmost of their Power, and to the End of their Days.

First, then, I am to shew that God has intended us for the Practice of good Works, because he has, in CHRIST, fitted us for them.

This was originally God's Will in his first Creation, *who before ordained*, saith the Text, *that we should walk in them*; but, Man failing, he has been graciously pleased to re-create us for the same Purpose in CHRIST. And be sure he did not rekindle the Light that was gone out, and set up afresh the Candle of the LORD, to have it extinguished again, or to be clapp'd under a Bushel; nor has he bestowed such Talents on Men, to be bound up in a Napkin, and buried in the Bowels of the Earth. *They are created in CHRIST*, saith the Text, *unto good Works*; *i. e.* they are, through him, form'd and brought forth with such Powers, Affections, and Inclinations, as now naturally fit and dispose them for a pious Life and heavenly Conversation. And this excellent Structure and Constitution of the Mind, points out to us plainly what Works must regularly and properly issue from it: For surely God would never give a new Heart and a new Spirit, only that we might live according to the Wisdom and Spirit of the old one.

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Were there no other godly Life than what the World counts such, I am confident there needed no new Creation to fit Men for it. What is there in the whole Frame of outward Religion, which the outward Man can't easily perform? As for the devotional Part of it; such as orderly standing or kneeling, at a certain Time and Place appointed, there to repeat, or rather hear repeated by another, excellent Forms of Words; may not a Publican do the same? Nay, may not an Harlot, a Sot, an Idiot, do the same? Such Devotion will disturb no one's Lusts, nor will any one's Lusts disturb such Devotion: They are quite consistent, and may go Hand joined in Hand, as they have done from the Beginning.

And then for the Righteousness of it; to pretend to love those that pretend to love them; to pretend to be good Neighbours to those who pretend to think as they do; to avoid the odious Character of Extortioner or Adulterer; to be no open Swearer, or remarkable Sabbath-breaker; there is not so very much in all this, but a *Pharisee* might reach it, if not exceed it. Such Religion, and such as are occupied therein, the Earth brings forth of itself. *What do you more than others,* saith CHRIST to his Disciples? When we behold that sapless, lifeless, empty Thing the World calls Religion, one would think that common Sense and Reason should suggest this Question to our Minds—Hath GOD created Mankind a-new, made them capable of the Divine Nature; hath he so wonderfully wrought them, not in the lower Parts of the Earth, but in the highest Heavens; hath he sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their Hearts, to cry *Abba*, Father, for no better Purpose than this? Hath God planted such a glorious Gospel; raised up such

a mighty Saviour, to give himself for us, to shed his Blood for our Redemption; and, to seal all, hath he sent down the Almighty Spirit to be our Guide, Teacher, and Comforter in his Stead, only to enable us to do what we could have done as well without him? Hath he commissioned Ambassadors to labour and travel till CHRIST be form'd in us, and that at the Hazard and actual Expence of their Lives, and all for no more than this? To make Holidays, and bring us together now and then to be religiously entertained! A Practice Heathens never omitted, and in which *Jews* have gone beyond us. Surely all this Cost, all this mighty Building, founded on the Blood of Apostles and Prophets, and of which CHRIST himself is the chief Corner-Stone, must have some nobler Design. Only read the History of Christianity; how it has been foretold from the very Creation; prophesied of through all succeeding Ages; the Law itself ordained for a Type of it, and whose Office is only as a Schoolmaster to bring us thereunto: See only what righteous Blood has been shed, before it could make its Way into a stubborn and disobedient World, and then judge whether the Almighty Wisdom could consistently take all these Steps, only to bring forth such a Thing as we call Religion! It is impossible to conceive it. No, the most holy, heavenly, and spiritual Life and Conversation, is radically and seminally wrapp'd up in the very Bowels of Christianity. We are created in CHRIST to good Works of an higher Order, than those that are born only after the Flesh are in any wise capable of performing, or so much as understanding, or else all this mighty Apparatus has been the most impertinent and useless Thing imaginable. And what these good Works are, is what I now,

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Under my *second* Head, proceed to set forth and explain. We are to understand then, in the general, by good Works, holy and gracious Acts, arising out of an upright Heart, from a pure Conscience, and from Faith unfeigned. All and every of which Fountain Principles of Action are the Gift of God in CHRIST; for without him we can do nothing; nay, in the Land of Righteousness, we are nothing, we have neither Place nor Existence.

I am sensible that it will be here expected, according to the Custom of treating this Head, that I should produce a List of such good Works as may find commendable Employment for a Christian Man: And though I am satisfied of the Uselessness of such Proceeding, as it is commonly managed, yet as I may make a particular Benefit of it another Way, it shall be complied with. How impertinent would it seem to detain an hungry or thirsty Man, eager in Appetite, with reading over long Bills of Fare, or Dissertations upon Mastication, or the digestive Powers: And, to one that has lost all Appetite, such Treatment would be downright abusive. It is a somewhat like Case with respect to the inner Man: He that hungers and thirsts after Righteousness, may well trust to the Direction of those heavenly Appetites, which are the infallible Proofs of an heavenly Life, without much Inquiry: They will best lead him, with the Eagles in the Gospel, to that Carcass which is their proper Food: And, to one who has no such spiritual Appetite, all Instruction of this Kind is foreign; nor will all the Descriptions or Exhortations in the World ever beget one. But what the World sets forth as good Works, are sometimes really very bad ones, both to the Giver and to the Receiver, as they

they serve to feed the one with Vanity and Presumption, and the other with Hypocrisy and Idleness. And even those which are good and profitable unto Men, such as the Exercise of Bounty and Liberality, the giving Alms, feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked, visiting and relieving the Afflicted, contributing to the building Hospitals, and casting in much to the Sacred Treasury for Religious Uses: Though all these are excellent and praise-worthy in their Kind, yet, as the Trumpet may be sounded before them, they are not to be trusted to, nor is there any Occasion for a new Creation to enable any one in the Performance of them. The old Man, when his Affections are artfully moved, can act his Part to the Height in all these, without one Grain of the Spirit of true Christianity. Heathens, *Jews*, *Turks*, nay, Infidels can and do, to the Shame of some that are call'd Christians, club largely to many of these good Works: And yet we are so blind as to insist almost wholly upon these, and that to the utter Neglect of the more substantial and weightier Matters. Nothing is strictly Christian, that can be done without the Mind of CHRIST; nor Godly, but what GOD directs the Heart and Mind into: So that good Works upon the Christian Scheme, signify the very same with a good or godly Life, the doing and observing all that GOD has commanded for GOD's Sake. Living holily, honestly, circumspectly, and in the continual Exercise of the Graces of CHRIST; such as Humility, Faith, Hope, Charity; ever striving to mortify and subdue Pride and Lust; labouring to govern our Hearts and Tongues; rightly ordering our Carriage towards GOD and Man; pursuing, with Zeal, all Acts of Righteousness and Mercy; instant in Prayer, and attentive to improve every good Gift

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we receive in Answer to it; swift to hear the Word of GOD, and to receive it with pure Affection; lending without Hope of receiving any Thing again; giving, and what's a thousand Times harder, forgiving; Peace-making, instructing, exhorting, rebuking; denying ourselves, taking up our Cross contentedly, and following CHRIST chearfully. This is fighting the good Fight of Faith; this is being rich towards GOD; this is laying up Treasure in Heaven.

Here is a List now of good Works; which, tho' but short and imperfect, yet I believe, if we take them as they lie, will be found sufficient to keep a Christian Man doing during the Course of his Life.

To knit up all these together in one short Form of Words.—All those are good Works, and none else, concerning which CHRIST will say at the last Day—*Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy LORD.* I must not here omit to put you in Mind, that all and every of these must issue from the proper Spring and Fountain of all Goodness in Man, which is Faith, the Gift of GOD in CHRIST. It is indeed the very working Power in our Souls; it is what makes all Goodness stirring, and what brings it forth into Thoughts, Words, and Deeds.

This is the Work of GOD, saith our Saviour, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent. Exercise then and improve this precious Talent, and the Increase will be an hundred Fold. It is called, in Scripture, a lively Faith, because Life is its Principle, and if it work not it is dead; *i. e.* it is no Faith at all, but something else mistaken for it. See only what blessed Comfort it works into the Soul! As then those who
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trust in GOD, because they have the Promise and Oath of GOD for Security, shall never be confounded; so those that believe they shall be saved, because they find their Hearts purified by Faith; who believe their Names are written in Heaven, because they find the Law of GOD written on their Hearts; who believe they shall not come into Condemnation, because they walk in the Way of CHRIST; who believe they shall overcome Death, because they have overcome the World; that they shall reap in Mercy, because they have sown in Righteousness; that they shall reap in Joy, because they have sown in Tears: These shall receive the Inheritance of Sons, because they have received the Adoption of Sons, and find themselves so knit and firmly joined to the LORD, that neither Death nor Life, Things present nor Things to come, are able to separate them from the Love of GOD which is in CHRIST JESUS. Those that Faith, and its Works, has wrought up to this Pitch of Confidence, shall never be confounded; it shall certainly be unto them according to their Faith. The Word of the LORD is sure; and if by such good Works, within and without, Men fulfill the Gospel-Conditions, their Salvation is as secure as if their particular Names were written at Length in the Promises. Ye are created in CHRIST to this good Work; to obtain a Faith that enables you to lay hold on the Righteousness of CHRIST and his redeeming Power, to purify your Heart, to mortify the Flesh, and to overcome the vain Hope of finding Happiness in worldly Things: And let the World mock on, and call the Consolation that arises from such Works Delusion, if they please. As they are to be Losers they may be allowed to laugh now, tho' a terrible Woe awaits such Mirth; but

but let them not laugh you out of your Confidence, which has great Recompence of Reward. This leads me to

The *third* and *last* Thing I promised to speak to; which was to exhort all those who have happily begun in these Sort of good Works, that they persevere therein with all their Might, and to the End of their Days; for to this Purpose were they created in CHRIST. *What thy Hand findeth to do, saith the Ecclesiastes, do it with all thy Might.—Be zealous in good Works, saith St. Paul; alway abounding in the Work of the LORD, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the LORD.—And fear the LORD thy GOD, saith Moses, all the Days of thy Life.* There is to be no Intermission thought or sought after: Ye are called not only to Well-doing, but to a Continuance in Well-doing. There are to be no Chafms or Vacuities in our Lives; no serving GOD To-day, and *Mammon* To-morrow; no halting between two Opinions; no Communion between CHRIST and *Belial*; there can be no Friendship with the World, without Enmity with GOD. To demand a Breathing-time from Goodness, is as absurd as to demand a Relaxation from Honesty or Chastity; that after the Soul has refresh'd itself with a few Acts of Knavery and Lust, it may then return to the Practice of those Virtues with fresh Vigour and new Alacrity.

The Soul of Man is of that active Nature, that it cannot stand still; all the Time we are not in the Service of GOD, we are in the Service of Sin. One Master, or the other, is, every Moment of our Lives, the Lord over us. Indeed GOD is so gracious a Master,
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and CHRIST so loving a Redeemer, that whoever has been happily employed in their Service, and have been admitted to taste of the Bread that cometh down from Heaven, can no more desire or relish any other Entertainment, than a Man who had been constantly used to wholesome and well-tasted Food would desire, for a Change, to feed on Husks and Draff with Swine.

Whoever therefore thinks Godliness tedious, and hankers after Vanity for Recreation and Refreshment, proves plainly that he has never tasted how gracious the LORD is. Rather labour the more earnestly, and double your Diligence, on account of this Sophistry of the World, demanding Rest from Labour in the LORD. When are they tired with covetous Practices; when do they demand a Relaxation from Pride, or the Exercise of Vanity, to refresh with Self-denial and Mortification? Let their own Works judge them. When therefore they bespatter your over-much Righteousness and over-much Diligence, bewail your Negligence, press forward with the greater Earnestness, confident of this very Thing, that you can never exceed: For when you have done all that is appointed you, and finished the Work GOD hath given you to do, he will call you out of this State of Trial into that better World, whither your Works will follow you, and where you will eat the Fruit of your Doings, with him that created and enabled you to perform them, even with your LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-



S E R M O N XII.

ROMANS xi. 33.

O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!



THE particular Occasion of this the Apostle's vehement Exclamation in the Text; I shall not at present meddle withall; but apply myself immediately to the Matter that oversets, as it were, his Understanding and Thoughts, and constrains him to burst out in these Words of Astonishment. It was no less than the Great God himself, contemplated in his Nature, Works, Word, and Judgments: These he pronounces incomprehensible; above and beyond all merely human Intelligence to search into; past Man's Capacity, satisfactorily to find out.

And this I shall make the Subject of my following Discourse, treating each of them in the Manner and Order in which they now lie before us; adding to

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every one of them, as they come in Turn to be spoken to, a Word of Use and Application. My four Heads are these,

I. GOD in his Nature and Essence.

II. GOD in his Works.

III. GOD in his Word. And

IV. GOD in his Judgments, Counsels, and Providence. In none of these can Man judge his Maker, without the Imputation of Folly. They are all above his Reach, and were fix'd and established in the Wisdom of the Holy One, before his little blind and borrowed Life was assigned him.

First, then, let us try to consider the Supreme Being in his Nature and Essence. O the Depth! How does a Cloud, at the very Attempt, take him, as it were, out of our Sight! What a vast Gulph is there fix'd between him and us! *Canst thou by searching find out GOD, saith Job! It is the Height of Heaven; what canst thou do? It is deeper than Hell; what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* His very Name *Jehovah*, which more particularly denotes his Being, has been by many held unspeakable; of too sublime a Comprehension to be pronounced by our base Organs of Speech; how much more may the Knowledge of his Nature, which passeth all Understanding, be thought too high and too holy for our clumsy and corrupt Conceptions? Even St. *John* himself, though he be called, by way of Eminence, in the Knowledge and

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Revelation of the Spirit, and Principles of the Heavenly Kingdom, *The Divine*; though he be represented in Scripture as a spiritual Eagle, which soars up on high, and seems, as it were, to look the Brightness of God's Glory in the very Face; tho' he lean'd too on his Saviour's Breast, the Seat of Affection, and of Secrets also; though he laid his Head in the very Bosom of the Deity; yet when he comes to tell us what God is, his Powers fail him, and shrink beneath the unequal Weight. He lets us know indeed, and boasts highly of his Message, That God is Light, and that God is Love; which helps us to no farther a Knowledge of the Deity, than a Description of him from a Creature of his own, or a Passion of ours, will afford us. Being inspired, he could say thus much; being but a Man, speaking to Men, he could say no more. And he rather confesses that the Time was to come when we should be qualified to see God as he is. If we strive to take him in Pieces, and labour to let him down to a Size fit for our Apprehensions, by dividing his never-to-be-divided Nature into Parcels and Attributes, we shall find our Knowledge but little advanced: For every one of these Portions are infinite; that is, incomprehensible. His Wisdom is infinite; his Goodness, infinite; his Power, infinite; his Glory, infinite: And therefore, though by natural and undeniable Consequences, or, by a surer Witness, that of an inward Sense and Feeling, we are constrained to conclude and acknowledge that there must be a good God before and over all; yet to have an adequate Conception of what he is, or to image out any Notion of Self-existence, falls not within the Compass of our finite Capacities. Thus a Man that is born blind may be said to know assuredly, and without all Manner of Doubt, that there is such a

Thing as Fire, because he feels it, and it warms him : This sensible and powerful Acting is the best Proof of its Existence ; nevertheless he is utterly incapable of knowing, or having any just Idea of its Appearance in the Eyes of those who see its Brightness, and can behold the marvellous working of its all-devouring Properties.

And indeed, when we come closely to consider, we shall find all the Attributes, by which God is set forth to us, are only such as signify our total Inability to conceive his Manner of Existence. As when we are taught to call him Eternal, Infinite, Invisible ; what are these but so many different Modes of Unintelligibleness ? All pointing at Ignorance ; all leading to Humility and Abasement. For otherwise they intimate no more, than that God is like unto his Creatures in some such Thing as they are wont most to magnify and commend. This appears from our adding the improper Epithet Moral to them ; thus we call his Justice, Mercy, Goodness, and Truth, his Moral Attributes ; and that by the same Figure of Speech, as when we attribute the Passions of our Minds to him, and say, He is grieved and angry, pleased and provoked, repents and turns ; or the Members of our Body, and so speak of receiving at his Hands, and being under the Inspection of his all-seeing Eye : Whereas God is in himself unchangeable ; without Parts, or Passions. But we are here sunk, as it were, into a deep Pit, where but a small Portion (*tres non amplius ulnæ*) of Heaven can be taken into our View. And therefore the outward Appearance of God, though but in some adopted Shape, or mortal Representation, was ever so dreadful since the Loss of Paradise, and the Entrance of

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Sin into the World, that the holiest of the Sons of Men have wondered how they could endure the Sight and survive it.

So *Jacob* at *Peniel*, and *Gideon* under the Oak, express themselves—*Alas ! O LORD GOD, because I have seen GOD Face to Face :—*And the Prophet *Isaiah* likewise, *Woe is me, for I am undone ; for mine Eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts !*

It is worth our observing here, that at the giving forth of the Law, tho' God thought fit to proclaim that in Fire and Lightning, yet he himself remained in thick Darkness. His Will was made notoriously conspicuous, but his Deity would lie concealed.—*Go not up, saith he, into the Mount ; no, nor touch the Border of it, lest ye gaze and perish.* But if at any Time this Light, which no Man can approach, hath displayed itself, though by Reflection only ; yet how have our mortal Eyes been dazzled to behold it ? The *Israelites* saw but a few Rays of his Glory ; and those too but at second-hand, as it were, from the Reflection of *Moses's* Face, and they could not bear it without the Interposition of a Veil. *St. Peter* had but a small Glimpse of this ravishing Vision, and the Vehemence of the Object quite amazes him : We straight find him grow giddy, and, as if overcome with it, making wild and extravagant Proposals, not knowing, as the Text adds, what he said.

And no Marvel ; for Heaven is God's Throne, and the Earth at best but his Footstool, and both are full of the Majesty of his Glory. How then shall Man, that is a Worm, aspire to those Discoveries at which the Cherubims veil their Faces ! Seeing the

Divinity of GOD, how bold soever some Men have made with it, says to us always, as did once his Humanity—Touch me not! GOD's Essence, or Nature, is too glorious an Object for our mortal Sight; such Knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for us, so that we must let that alone for ever.

But, however, be of good Cheer; GOD withholdeth nothing that is good from them that live a godly Life. Though we cannot speculate him, we may do better; we may feel after him, as the Apostle says, and happily find him too; for he is not far from every one of us. He is to be truly known now only by Faith, and in the Manner of a saving Knowledge CHRIST opens him in the Hearts of all those that obey him. *No Man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.* This is Gospel Knowledge, and in it standeth eternal Life. He is the Brightness of GOD's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, and both are to be seen by the Faithful in the Face of JESUS CHRIST, though utterly unintelligible to the natural Man. Proceed we now,

Secondly, to consider the Wonders of GOD in his Works. These are the most visible and apparent Part of him, and by which he seems, as it were, on purpose to expose himself to our View; yet even here Reason is at a Loss; his Ways are, as his Nature, past finding out. *There are secret Things which tho' a Man labour to seek out, saith Solomon, yea, though a wise Man think to know, yet shall he not be able to find them.* Let us try this Observation upon our selves: We boast of an immortal Soul; a Blast of the Divine Breath; an Image of the Deity within us; yet all the while this Soul understands not so much as itself: We lodge an Inmate in our Bosom,

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perhaps for Scores of Years, and yet in all the Time are not able to discover either whence, or what it is. We question its Original, whether from Heaven, or of Men; we make endless Disputes concerning its Substance, Powers, and Faculties, whilst others never trouble their Heads about it, neither knowing nor caring whether they have a Soul to be saved or not. But where is the wise Man that can tell you what that strange busy Principle within is, that actuates and informs this wonderful Piece of Workmanship, so that it can freely move of itself, and be sensible of Pleasure and Pain, of Honour and Disgrace? Perfections which the most curious Engine that was ever wrought by the Hand of Man, could never come up to. Who can sufficiently discover the Source, or Substance, of his own Ideas; or how, by Reflection, these strange and subtle Sensations are afterwards wrought up, by the Mind, into the Result of Reason? Where it begins to compare, distinguish, and conclude. Who knows by what secret Mechanism the Passions and Affections are moved; or how all the Notices of Things past, the Images of Sight or Hearing, are treasured up in the Memory as in a Storehouse, and take up their Lodgment in the Brain? Which yet when Anatomists come to search, they find no Footsteps of all these various Impressions. A crude and lifeless Lump, very unfit for such noble and excellent Operations, is all that turns out to their Observation: And hardly can they discern any considerable Difference between the Brain of the wisest and most knowing Person, and that of the dullest Idiot; nay, of the very Beast that perisheth.

Surely well might *David* cry out,—*I am fearfully and wonderfully made*—starting, as it were, at the
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Contemplation of his own Frame; whose strange Composure did not only puzzle but amaze him. If we inquire farther into the rest of God's Works without us, we shall hear of an invisible World, inhabited by Angels and Spirits; which, as the *Sadducees* of old denied to be at all, so we, in most Things concerning their Nature, Orders, and Offices, are wholly in the Dark, and must rest contented with that slender Knowledge the Scriptures afford; which is, as it were, a faint Light, glimmering in a dark Place. Whatever we attempt more St. *Paul* calls intruding, and the Issue of a puff'd Mind.

But what Wonder that we are ignorant in Matters thus high, and out of the Reach of our Senses, when, in Things of inferior Rank, his Footsteps are not known. *Hardly do we guess aright, as saith the Wise Man, at the Things that are before us.—He goes by me, saith Job, and I see him not; behold I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him.* All our Attempts are little else but going backwards and forwards. Sometimes Nature seems willing to unveil, to open her Secrets in some notable Experiment, and then we sing Triumph to our Inventions; Light is come that will lead us to the open Day; a Clew is found that will guide us through the whole Labyrinth of Knowledge! When, alas! some unexpected Discovery quite crosses and thwarts the former; new Difficulties arise, that so perplex and intangle the Hypothesis, that we are fain to depart no wiser than we came, and rest content with the cold Comfort of having discovered Effects instead of Causes; adding only this to our Knowledge, that we are more ignorant than we were formerly aware of.

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How should all this lead us to Humility, and a child-like Trust in God! Who exalts his Mercy above all his Works; who gives Wisdom to the Simple; and opens his Secrets amongst those that fear him. And what want we more of Knowledge in the Works of God, than to be taught of him that he works all our Works in us; that he works in us both to will and to do; and that he will reward this his Work in us with Life everlasting. But I hasten to

My *third* Consideration, of God in his Word; which, be sure, was purposely intended to reveal him: Nevertheless, even here too, God manifests himself as he pleases, rather than as he is, and that only to those that love him. To say nothing of those many Parts of the Old Testament, which, to human Learning, are entirely sealed up and hidden; involved in difficult Phrases, dark Prophecies, and inextricable Mysteries; yet if we come to the Gospel, that Day-Spring from on high, that publisheth the News of Light that is to lighten every Man that cometh into the World; even that too we shall find enlightens but to a limited Degree; there is a certain Disposition necessary, and without that 'tis all but Shine in such a Sort of Darknes as comprehendeth it not: It has its Obscurity as well as Brightness; and besides those Mists and Clouds which our own Ignorance and untoward Apprehensions; our worldly Affections and perverse Disputings; our continual Endeavours to make it fit and coincide with earthly Policy, have rais'd to obscure it; the Gospel is but as Darknes to every mere rational Believer, in regard of the many insuperable Difficulties it contains. Trinity in Unity; two Natures in one Person; a Virgin conceiving by
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the Holy Ghost; a Woman the Mother of her Maker; a Child born who was before all Worlds; and that Person suffering Death, that only hath Life and Immortality: All these are, to Reason, mere Riddles; they are the perplex'd Oracles of the Word; and tho' utter'd by Truth itself, yet are sincerely believed by none but those to whom God has given to believe them. Faith, by which alone they are embraced, is purely his Gift: But as for *Nicodemus's* Question,—*How can these Things be?* That stands unanswered to this very Day: These are Secrets which the very Angels only desire to look into; and which no Man can see till he be born from above; till he be made a Member of CHRIST, and a Child of God. And whosoever shall go about to explain these Things to the natural Man, by Words of Man's Invention; by slight Similitudes from Nature, or from the subtle Distinctions of the Schools, he may become like a sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal; he may amuse himself and his Hearers with his learned Discourses; but all the while they neither know what he says, nor he whereof he affirms. It is *St. Paul's* Caution,—*Beware lest any Man spoil you through Philosophy:* And had not the perverse Disputings of Men of corrupt Minds forced Believers to have Recourse to it for some Determinations, the Faith of CHRIST had done much better without it. What made it necessary, makes it excusable; nevertheless, it is hard to say whether Philosophy has done Scripture Truths more Injury from the Hands of its Friends or its Enemies. If we sit down right to read the Word, it will give forth its Wisdom abundantly; but if we skip over Penitence, and come hungering and thirsting rather to satisfy Curiosity than to obtain Righteousness, not a Drop of her sincere Milk will the Word give down.

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Repent, and believe the Gospel, is the Godly Order in which these Things stand; and, unless they are so pursued, no Benefit can be obtained. But,

Fourthly and lastly, we are to consider God in his Judgments: At the very Sight of which *David* cries out,—*Thy Judgments are like the great Deep*: Such another as is said to overwhelm the World: An Abyss, dark and boundless, and not to be fathomed.

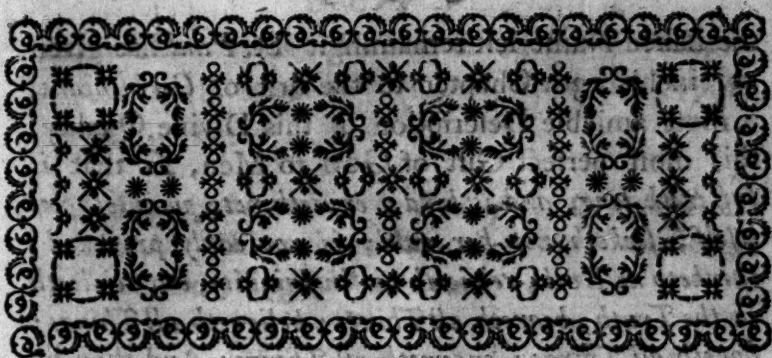
No Man, saith *Solomon*, can find out the Work that GOD maketh, from the Beginning to the End: The whole Web and Weaving, the Thread and Pile, are all so finely spun, and so intricately compounded and knit together, that it surpasseth all human Wit and Sagacity to unravel it. For the Manner; God will be accountable to no Man, but worketh all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will. For the Time; the Holy One of *Israel* will not be limited: His Work goes on his own Pace, even when we think it stands stock-still, or rather is running backwards. *Though it tarry*, saith the Prophet, *it will surely come; it will not tarry*: And, as to the Means, God will use what Instruments he pleases, though to us never so weak or improbable; perhaps none at all; nay, sometimes such as, to Man's Apprehension, appear quite contradictory to the Intention. Creation is ever before him, and all Things serve and obey his Will: And these Secrets of the Divine Judgment are so many, that *Zophar*, in the Book of *Job*, tells us that they are double to what is revealed. He means that those Events, which we do not discern the Reason of, are more in Number than those with which we are ordinarily acquainted.

Well

Well then, upon the whole, may we join Issue with the Apostle in the Text, and cry out, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD; how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* And where's the Damage of all this! GOD wants not Man's Wisdom, neither do we lack his Knowledge; what he requires of us, is Faith and Obedience; what we should ask of him, is a Portion of his Goodness; and this he gives liberally to all that crave it of him in Sincerity.

Let us not then repine at our Ignorance, nor complain of the Shallowness of our Understanding, since we know where to obtain that Grace which will conduct us safe through this World, into a blessed Eternity. We have, in CHRIST, the Knowledge of GOD's Truth, and the Wisdom of the Just; to what higher Pitch of Understanding can we aspire? *For behold the Fear of the LORD, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil, that is Understanding.* Give us then, O gracious GOD, this Wisdom from above, which is no other than the Grace of thy dear Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to whom therefore, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

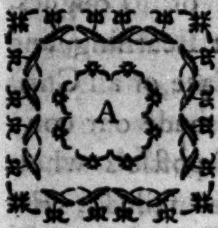
S E R.



S E R M O N XIII.

1 TIMOTHY i. 5.

The End of the Commandment is Charity out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conscience, and of Faith unfeigned.

ND a blessed End it is; which if we had Grace always to remember, as the wise Man speaks, *We should never do amiss*; but it seems almost utterly forgotten amongst us to be any Part at all of our Gospel. For tho' every one has his Ends in professing the Gospel, which the Apostle here calls *the Commandment*, yet Charity seldom appears to be one of them, either first or last; so that if in any Sense it may claim the Title here given it in the Text, it must be in this bad one, That we have made an End of it. The very Principle seems well nigh extinguished, at least its working Power is disabled, and little more than the

the naked Name left remaining. *St. Paul* has given us, in his 13th Chapter to the first of *Corinthians*, a most amiable Description of this Divine Quality, this most perfect Gift of GOD to Men, as that *it suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no Evil; rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth; beareth all Things; believeth all Things; hopeth all Things; endureth all Things*: And then he proceeds to tell us, that this Charity never faileth; *but whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away*: Are these Things so? Does this distinguished Mark, by which all Men may know CHRIST's Disciples, appear upon us? Do we live and walk in this Spirit, and are the Fruits of it in us, and abound; or rather is not the Reverse of all this, the true Characteristic of those that are called Christians in this our Day? For do not Prophefying or Preachings abound amongst us? Are not Languages, and Variety of Tongues, almost in every ones Mouth? Is not Learning and Knowledge dispersed wide over the Face of all Christendom, and its daily Improvement made our constant Boast? And, contrary to the Apostle's whole Scheme, it is Charity alone that has failed, *But let GOD be true, and every Man a Liar*. It never did, nor ever shall, fail to be a sure Means of Salvation to every Soul that is possessed of this most excellent Gift, when all those others without it, whether Language, Science, or Utterance, may and will fail in the one Thing necessary, and vanish in the Day of Trial as Smoak.

And

And this is what I shall endeavour, in my following Discourse upon the Subject, to make appear. Shewing,

I. Negatively, what *the End of the Commandment* is not : 'Tis neither Learning, nor Knowledge, nor Preaching. And then,

II. Shew, positively, what it is.—*The End of the Commandment is Charity, out of a pure Heart, a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned.*

First, then, I am to shew, negatively, what *the End of the Commandment* is not : 'Tis neither Oratory, Learning, or Science.

The many fulsome Addresses that are perpetually made by the Enemies of all Revelation, to the Pride and Vanity of human Nature ; which, by the way, wants no such Kind of Flattery ; setting forth the absolute Sufficiency of Man's Understanding to judge and determine the Bounds of his Duty and Obligation, whether to GOD or Man, cannot fail moving all that hope to be saved by Faith in a crucified Redeemer, to contradict these high, but false and pernicious, Pretences. For Man, whose very Nature is a Complication of Vice and Error, and whose whole History, from the Beginning, is little more than a paultry Account of Wrath and Lust, working towards their respective Ends, thro' a beaten Tract of Baseness and Blunders : For such a Thing as this to pretend to dogmatize on the Creator's Will, and set out what Laws he is obliged to act by, with regard to us, his poor helpless fallen Creatures, is the highest Instance of human Weakness, as well as

Pre-

Prefumption : Pride and Folly mingled can be no farther exalted. I am sensible how easy a Matter it is, when one is so disposed, to declaim either on the Excellency, or on the Imperfection, of the human Understanding. Plausible Things may be said on either Side of any Question : But all that is to the Purpose, must arise from a due Consideration of the Nature of the Subject it offers to handle. It has Judgment in superficial Matters, and the Things of this World, which are outward ; made up of Form and Fashion, and those opened and shut by Light and Shade, it may grapple withal ; this is its proper Province ; and these Things sometimes lay so far within the Reach of its Abilities, as that it forms very entertaining and consistent Discourses about them. But the Things that are of Heaven, who, with such Abilities, can search out ? *The World by Wisdom knows not GOD*, and how then should it, by the same Faculty, understand what the Will of the LORD is ? All Books of Science, Policy, and Pleasure, are the Works of the Learned ; and which, as their proper own, they may alter, set up, and pull down at Pleasure ; but to the Book of GOD they have no Manner of Title. They see not so far as the Reason why GOD gave *the Commandment*, and how then should they see that *the End of it is Charity* ? The natural Man has his Reason and Knowledge ; let them be confined to their proper Objects, to the little Matters of this present evil World, of which he is welcome to make the best he can ; but indeed the Things that belong to the better World to come, that pertain to GOD and Gospel Godliness, as he favours them not, so neither can he understand them, and that because they are spiritually discern'd ; he is for rejecting every Thing, as Absurdity and

*Con-

Contradiction, because he cannot comprehend it; whereas the proper Inference should be, that he has no Right or Title to meddle with such Matters. He may think to understand this, but it is too hard for him, till Gospel Charity warm his Heart, and Divine Love widen and exalt his Capacities; till then Evangelical Knowledge falls not under his Cognizance.

St. *Paul*, the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*, in whom Human Learning was joined with Divine Inspiration; famous for his Eloquence; the chief Speaker; foremost in preaching, or prophesying, and coming behind in no Accomplishment, whether attainable by Parts or Erudition, has a Natural as well as a Divine Right to open his Mouth with Freedom, and speak boldly upon the Subject, as he ought to speak. Let us hear him then, for he does it home and to the Purpose; ever jealous lest any of these, whether worldly Wisdom or Knowledge, Science or Oratory, should be mistaken for the End, or any Part, of his Gospel, he makes a formal Renunciation of them all; shrinking, as it were, at the Thoughts, lest any of these dead Flies, as the wise Man speaks, should fall into the Heavenly Ointment, and marr the sacred Composition. *I determined, saith he, to know nothing among you but JESUS CHRIST and him crucified.*

And this Testimony of God he declares not with Excellency of Speech, or with the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, lest their Faith should stand in the Wisdom of Men, and not wholly in the Power of God; and lest the Cross of CHRIST should be made of none Effect: For the Preaching of the

Cross is to them that perish Foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the Power of GOD : For it is written, *I will destroy the Wisdom of the Wise, and will bring to nothing the Understanding of the Prudent.* He then inquires what is become of him : *Where is the Wise ; where is the Scribe ; where is the Disputer of this World ?* He proceeds :—*You see your Calling Brethren, how that not many Wise Men after the Flesh, not many Mighty, not many Noble are called ; but GOD has chosen the Foolish of this World to confound the Wise ; and all this, that no Flesh should glory in his Presence.* It is marvellous, and indeed moving, to see how the Apostle labours for such apt, strong, and clear Expressions, as may beget in his Hearers a true Sense of the Gospel Genius, as it appeared to him in its native Simplicity ; and that by shewing what it is not, as well as what it is ; and how likewise they must be qualified that understand it, and to what Kind of Disposition it must for ever remain an impenetrable Secret. It is not Knowledge, that is flat ; Knowledge puffeth up, and the Gospel has nothing to do with Puffing of any Kind : Neither is it Wisdom ; let no Man deceive himself with such a Thought. *If any among you seem to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may be wise ; so far forth however as to know himself rightly in this Particular ; for the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with GOD ; nor has it any Thing to do with a Party Spirit : For while one saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, are ye not carnal, and walk as Men, like other People ?* Nor is it a Disposition to judge ; no, no more than the Kingdom of Heaven is Meat and Drink : It says positively *Judge not, he that judgeth is the LORD ; judge nothing therefore before the Time, untill the LORD come.*

come. Indeed there are these Words, *the spiritual Man judgeth all Things, yet he himself is judged of no Man*; but the Word in the Margin, where the Truth of the Text is usually found, standing aside, will give immediate Relief to this Difficulty; it is, *discerneth*; and then the whole Passage falls into this plain and worthy Meaning.—That a Christian understands the worldly Man, because he shares with him in the Infirmities of his Nature; but the worldly Man understands not the Christian, because he enjoys no Part or Portion with him in the Mind of CHRIST; for who should instruct him? None of his own Class know any more of the Matter than himself.

But notwithstanding all this, the Gospel is made up both of Wisdom and Power, tho' of another Kind: *It is the very Power of GOD unto Salvation, and Wisdom amongst those that are perfect*, is the Apostle's constant Topic: And which, tho' not the Wisdom of the World, nor of the Learned of this World who come to nought; yet it is such for Excellence, *as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it enter'd into the Heart of meer Man to conceive*; and though ordained before the Foundation of the World for our Glory, and prepared from everlasting for those that love God, yet none of the Wise of this World knew it; for if they had, they would not have crucified the LORD of Glory, who had prepared it for them.

Now, how heinously God resents any Man's intruding, as a Judge, in Matters purely Divine, before he be called thereunto, by being made a Partaker of his Grace; or, which is the same, pretends

to meddle with the Things of CHRIST without the Mind of CHRIST, may be gathered from these two Passages of the Old Testament: He smites the Men of *Bethbemesb* only for peeping presumptuously into the Ark, and that at a Time when it was in its lowest Credit; when he had given it up into the Hands of the *Philistines*, and suffered himself, as it were, to become a Prisoner in a strange Land: And none were permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies, God's inmost Residence in his Sanctuary, but the High Priest, and he but once a Year, and then, not without a Propitiation. So careful is the Divine Mercy to keep all at a Distance from his Greatness, who have not been first made Partakers of his Goodness.

I shall conclude this Head with the Advice of *Moses*, which *St. Paul* takes up and applies to the Purpose.—*Say not in thy Heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven?* As if sublime Speculation could fetch him down from thence! Nor *who shall descend into the Deep?* as if our Diving into the Abyss of God's secret Things could either bring him nearer to us, or us nearer to him! No, here is yet no Gospel—The saving Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart; i. e. The Word of Faith, and whose immediate Offspring are Hope and Charity. Which leads me into

The Second Thing I purposed to consider, viz. To shew, positively, what the End of the Commandment is.—It is no other than *Charity out of a pure Heart, a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned.*

And

And this Solomon calls *the Conclusion of the whole Matter*. He had before been treating of the great Anxiety that accompanies all worldly Pursuits, especially when Men will needs perplex themselves in the Intricacies of GOD's Providence, which they can never find out ; or the Research of future Events, which they are as unable to know, as they are to escape : He has told us too, that *much Study is Weariness to the Flesh, and that Books are endless*. At last, saith he, *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter.—Fear GOD and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man.*

He that doth Righteousness is righteous, saith the Apostle ; not he that can argue finely touching GOD and his Decrees ; no, nor he that can say unto him LORD, LORD ; no, nor yet he that believes, for the Devils can do that in some Sort, we are told, and tremble too. *But if any Man do the Will of GOD*, saith our Saviour, *he shall know of the Doctrine*. We may talk of GOD in the Streets, and in the Synagogues ; we may say that we know him ; nay, we may think we are sure of it, and yet our treacherous Hearts may deceive us : *But hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments : And this is his Commandment, that we believe on the Name of the only begotten Son of GOD, and love one another*. Hereby shall all Men know that we are CHRISIT's Disciples, and hereby alone can we assure our Hearts before him. As for his Works they are all Wonders, and should serve to humble, and make us vile in our own Eyes : This is the Temper of Mind that must bring us to GOD thro' CHRISIT. In such a Frame of Spirit, *David* delights himself, when he professes not to exercise himself in great

Matters ; such Humility, such Abstinence, is truly Gospel.

See only how for this End GOD triumphs over Job's Ignorance ; and to humble him the more, poseth him in the common Things of Nature.——
Declare, saith he, if thou hast Understanding, where the Foundations of the Earth are fastened, or who laid the Corner Stone thereof ? How the proud Waves of the Sea are bounded, and the Day-spring knows its Place ? What is done in the great Deep ; or where is the Way where Light dwelleth ? At this he drops into Self-abhorrence, and repents in Dust and Ashes ; and this brings him immediately to GOD, when all his boasted Integrity and Self-righteousness could not do it. All this is Gospel, which leads us from the Sight of our own Ignorance, not only to Repentance, but to Charity and mutual Forbearance : For what are our Abilities beyond theirs with whom we so fiercely contend ? They are untoward in their Apprehensions ; and who is not, that is out of Charity ? They are in the Dark ; and upon whom, pray, hath the Light shined ? And till then all religious Disputes are but like a hasty Contention in the Dark, where each Man hurts himself and his Neighbour, and nothing is gained but Mischief on any Side. We act herein as if *the End of the Commandment* had been Quarrelling, and then truly it could not have been better answered ; but if its *End be Charity*, every angry Dispute puts the Point in Debate to a desperate End. As GOD has concluded all Men under Sin, that his Mercy might pass upon all ; so he seems to have concluded all Men under a Degree of Blindness, that their Mercy might pass freely to each other,

other, as amongst Brethren labouring under a like Infirmity.

What indeed has any Man upon Earth to do to impose his Opinions and Determinations upon his Fellow Christians? What is necessary, is here brought to a single, and to every Man, an intelligible Point; it is Charity. Secure but this, and let the Disputer of this World argue about the rest at his Pleasure; for I am confident it concerns us not.

And if any where Solomon's Advice may be construed into a Gospel Sense; for be sure he cannot caution us from being over good, it must be here. *Be not Righteous over much, neither make thyself over wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?* Since by making too nice an Inquisition into Things purposely placed beyond our Reach, we plunge ourselves into Gulphs and Quick-sands, into Doubts and Uncertainties, which will not so surely advance our Knowledge as increase our Sorrow.

The Way of Salvation God has promised to reveal in all those that do but sincerely ask it: *Ask then and ye shall receive*; and that in such a Proportion as God sees to be most expedient for us. Our very Ignorance may be, by Grace, improved into greater Degrees of Humility, and all our Wisdom and Knowledge can carry us no higher than to Perfection of Charity; so that, by both, the Ends of the Gospel may be equally answered.

Let it then be our constant and serious Care, so humbly to submit our Ignorance in the Things of God that are kept secret from us, and wisely to improve

prove our Knowledge in what is revealed, that as well by the Obscurity of the one, as by the Guidance of the other, we may, at length, be brought to conform all our Imaginations to those plain and unquestionable Duties of Piety and Obedience.—

He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good, saith the Prophet, and what else doth the LORD require of thee? Other Things he hath kept secret from us; or at least we owe their Discovery to our own Curiosity, and have our Labour only as a Recompence for our Pains: For who required this at our Hands? But these Duties of Love to GOD, and Charity towards each other, he hath shewed us plainly, in a duplicate Writing, both in the Gospel and on our Hearts; and these therefore he will strictly require of us; even to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with our GOD: *This is pure Religion, and undefiled.*

Let then all our Thoughts and Inquiries, all our Labour and Study, end here: For this alone we shall find, at the Last Day, to be the true Wisdom that will be justified of all her Children. For every good Word, and every good Work; all holy Desires, and all just Counsels, will necessarily and constantly flow from an Heart thus sanctified with the Fear of GOD, and the Love of our Neighbour; On these two hang all the Law and the Prophets, and on the same blessed and Christian Tempers must we all depend that hope to be saved, through him, from the Wrath to come.

The Time will one Day come, when, as it is said in the *Revelation of St. John, The Mystery of GOD shall be finished*, and all those precious hidden Things shall

shall be disclosed, that have hitherto lain unseen by any Saint on Earth,

But any Attempt in Man to hasten the Discovery, thro' Science or Sagacity, is really more absurd than the old *Jewish* Notion, of making Mint, and Anise, and Cummin, go for Judgment, Mercy, and Faith. Let God's Appointment suffice us in all Things ; and he has promised, that *tho' we know but in Part, and prophesy in Part, yet that we shall know, even as we are known ; tho' we see now but darkly, as in a Glass, we shall see Face to Face ; we shall see him as he is, to whom all Things are naked and open ; and by him be made Partakers of that Glory which shall hereafter be revealed in all those in whose Hearts Charity is now shed abroad thro' the Love of God, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD ; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. Amen.*

S E R.





S E R M O N XIV.

PSALM xxxix. 5.

*Verily every Man, at his best State, is altogether
Vanity.*



Am fully persuaded that what chiefly hinders Mankind from seeking after those better Things that are above, is the ready Hope they entertain of finding Satisfaction from the Enjoyment of the good Things that are here below.

I shall therefore do a good Work in endeavouring to remove this general Mistake, and to take up this Stumbling-block out of our Way; and, in strict Conformity to the Doctrine of the Text, labour to cut off all such groundless Hopes, by proving from Facts, and as Things now stand, that this Assertion of the Psalmist is strictly true; and that *every Man living, at his best Estate, is altogether Vanity.* For we need not search Hospitals, nor pick out, here and there, the most calamitous Part of Mankind to find Instances of human Frailty; we ourselves, with all
our

our vaunting, are Instances sufficient. The Infirmities of our Nature stick close to us all; and the Vanity of our Actions evince, that there is no Part of us exempt from this Sentence.

Our Childhood is confessedly Folly and Insensibility; our Youth too, but Folly and Madness; and our riper Age leads us on but to more serious and more anxious Trifles; and before we grow wise we grow old, and dote, and die.

A second Childhood ends our Life; and, which is worse, the Weakness of this second Childhood begins to shew itself, before the Infirmities of the first are well got over; and, without Respite or Deliverance, we naturally revolve into that helpless State from whence we began, and from whence we just before sprang forth. In treading the little Circle of this vain Life, we soon come up again with the Evils from whence we vain would fly; and, towards the Conclusion of it, find we have all to go over again, but the Pleasure and Innocence of our first Years; so that we become a mere Burden to ourselves, and to all that are about us.

But we need not lead a Man through the several Stages of his Life to see how they all agree in this, that they are foolish and vain: For though Man appears, in some Lights, a Creature most fickle and changeable, unsteady in all his Motions, and a very Contradiction to himself; yet, amidst all this Difference of outward Circumstance, he is really all of a Piece, and entirely consistent; in that his Indiscretions and Weaknesses, his Follies and Infirmities, stick close to his Nature, and pursue him through every

every Stage, every Period, of this vain Life. They change indeed their Objects perpetually, but they retain stubbornly their Mischief and Disquiet to the very last.

But, however, this we shall not urge: But take a Man in his greatest Advantages, and shew him in his best Light; invest him with all his real, or even his imaginary, Splendor; suppose him as strong and rich, as wise and virtuous too, as he knows how to make himself; yet even then he is but what Nature made him, frail, impotent, and foolish: For what is our boasted Wisdom, but Folly of a particular Make! What is all our Reason and Knowledge, but a Faculty of trifling with a better Sort of Decorum, and no more! Whatever human Wit can advance, human Wit can destroy; whatever human Learning can build up, human Learning can pull down again to the Ground.

So true is it that Man labours in a vain Shadow, and disquiets himself in vain. Verily every Man living, however qualified by Nature, however dignified or distinguished by Arts of his own Invention; not only when he is new come into the World, or just leaving of it; not only in some Efforts of Folly, occasionally provoked, but in his best Estate; when his Body and his Mind are at the highest Pitch of Perfection, and his Fortune answerable to both; even then, not only as to Externals, which all grant to be transitory and uncertain; but as to the highest and most noble Endowments of the Mind, even as to these too he is altogether Vanity; so as in no one Part of what he has, or what he is, to be able to find Refuge, when pursued either by the Infirmary of his Nature,

or

of the unaccountable Disquietness of his Soul. *Verily every Man living is altogether Vanity!* Were we to trace him through all those Things which we call Advantages, and give them but a strict Examination, we should see, in all, the Truth of the Assertion, and that Vanity and Wretchedness lie lurking at the Bottom of every one of his boasted Perfections.

How highly should these Considerations make us, poor Christians, value the Gifts of God's good Grace, beyond any Thing that Nature, or Art, or Fortune, can bestow upon us!

But I must contract my Views, and single out of the Mass of Vanity, that encompasses our miserable Nature on every Side, some one Particular to open and to expose: And as the Goods of Fortune are generally uppermost in our Thoughts and Affections, I shall give them the Pre-eminence of being first tried and condemned.

Now, the Goods of Fortune are proved vain, in that they are such: For what is Fortune, in our ordinary Notion, but Chance and Casualty; what may be otherwise than it is; what's exposed to Contingency, the Power of cross Accidents, and indeed we know not what. Now, though not Chance, but Providence really govern these Things; though God over-looks and directs all; yet since his Disposal for the future is to us uncertain, and we are no more assured that these Things shall continue, than if they came by mere Chance, therefore the Matter is not mended at all hereby to us, if we resolve to set up our Rest here, and put our Trust in these Uncertainties.

If

If indeed we make God our Refuge, then whatever happens shall work together for our Good: But this is no Credit to the Goods we are speaking of; that we must fly from them before we can find any Refuge, and in the very Act of confiding in the Divine Disposition to sanctify them to our Use and Advantage, we tacitly confess that, of themselves, they cannot help: They have that little Stability and Comfort we can find in them, from something besides themselves: In their own Nature, and leaving God out, they are the most perfect and unmix'd Vanity that we can any where find.

But to grow still more particular.——Let us view these Goods of Fortune under their several Denominations of Wealth, Honour, and Friends: For these last I take Leave to place here also, not without Reverence to that Friendship which is only an Exercise of Virtues, if there be any such; but only in respect of our ordinary Friendships, which are entirely oftentimes, and partly always, the Creatures of Chance.

Consider we then the natural Tendency of these Things, and we shall soon find that they regularly and ordinarily bring forth in us, as their genuine Fruit, these two following Tempers of Mind; and then judge of their Value, when by their Fruits ye shall know them.

I. Then, they make Men proud and pityless.

And,

II. They fix our Affections on themselves, and thereby utterly destroy our Relish and Desire for any better Things.

On

On each of which Particulars I hope to raise several useful (tho' mortifying) Reflections: For if Riches and Honours are to be rank'd amongst those many Things that increase Vanity, what is a Man the better for them? Inasmuch as they naturally and regularly incline their Possessors to be proud and pityless, which is the first Work they are disposed to do upon us. And this is the very Nature of these Things, and that which makes them valuable in our Eyes. We would be proud and pityless, that we might be delivered thereby from Fear and Shame; and accordingly they make us look down with Scorn and Disdain upon those that are not adorned with the same gaudy Trappings as ourselves; they ingenerate in us a certain Idea of Greatness and Magnificence, in which we pride ourselves, and feast our Fancy with the Admiration of our own Grandeur, with the same Kind of Vanity as a Peacock displays his Train.

We look upon ourselves, when thus exalted, as another Kind of Creatures, distinguished from the ordinary Herd of Men; great and almost God-like; when all is but Shew and Paint; gilded Vexation, and high-coloured Vanity: We are puff'd up, and swell, and, under the Power of this Tumor, indulge lofty Thoughts of distinguished Merit.

Hence, of Consequence, we learn to undervalue others, and become at once uncharitable: Hence we learn to prefer every little Convenience of our own, before our inferior Neighbour's Life or Safety; when perhaps God sees more in those who are contemned on account of low Life, as the modern Phrase is, than in some who are most highly exalted in earthly Grandeur. God estimates not after the Manner of Men;
what

what is highly esteemed amongst them, he has declared to be Abomination in his Sight. All Things are naked and open before him; he penetrates into our most secret Thoughts, and discovers the most retired Recesses of our Hearts: And when he enters into Judgment with his Servants he shall take the Simple up out of the Dust, and class him above Princes.

It is therefore the most idle Thing we can be guilty of, to bear ourselves high upon account of any Pre-eminence of Fortune; which, simply considered, is as far removed from Excellence of any Kind, as it is from Goodness itself.

Happier, much happier we, if, amidst these Advantages of Fortune, we remember yet the Equality of our Nature; and consider that we rose the other Day from the same Level with the meanest Mortal, and, in a few Days more, shall fall as low again.

Look up, O ye Rich and Great, into the Clouds, and see your Likeness there! Behold the Rainbow falls like the rest of the Cloud from which it comes, and in which it is; tho' it has an additional Beauty, which that wants, it will fall however, and then it is no more than ordinary Rain: There is nothing in it but a splendid Appearance, a gay Reflection, a little dazzling Paint, which will soon be lost and gone, and then all is gone that distinguished it; it loses its Privilege, and, in falling, becomes like the common Drops.

Thus it is with all Mankind; what Shew soever, by the Privilege of their Situation, they may make for a Time, yet, when they fall to the Ground with their Brethren, all Distinctions of this Kind cease.

Hence may we see how foolish it is to be elated by such Things and upon such Accounts; how unjust the Contempt of any whom God has made like ourselves; though Fortune has a little distinguished us. How much wiser would it be to behave modestly in the Midst of Honour; moderately in the Midst of Affluence; howsoever rich and great, to remember yet that we are but Men.

But this is one of the greatest Evils and Vanities too of these Goods of Fortune, that though they neither profit nor satisfy, yet they are apt to puff up; and this they have agreeable to their Nature, for they are but Air; notwithstanding they are considered as Man's best Estate, though they actually dispose him to forget his Mortality, and deny the Relation he bears both to God and Man. But,

Secondly, Another Mischief of them is (which gives farther Testimony to their Vanity) that they naturally engage and fix our Affections upon themselves, to the utter neglect of better Things.

And this is a great Evil, if we consider only that we must depart hence, and leave this present World, with all that belongs to it, and that not after any considerable Length of Time, but within a few Years at the farthest. Now, he acts with the greatest Advantage in this unavoidable Circumstance of human Nature, who is most disengaged and free, and has but little to part with, that may occasion Regret and Dissatisfaction.

But how hardly will he be brought to this, who has been used to value himself upon his Possessions, and

to triumph in the Splendor of his Fortune; how hard will it be to persuade such Men, that it is no Evil to be equalled at last with the Beggar that now stands before their Door, or perishes for Want upon the Dunghill; to such, these are hard Sayings indeed!

The young Man in the Gospel, though, as our Saviour told him, not far from the Kingdom of God, yet when he was commanded to sell all, and follow a suffering Master, one that had not where to lay his Head, went away sorrowful, for he was very rich; he could not quit his worldly Interest in Possession, for heavenly Treasures in Reversion only, though all the rest of God's Precepts he had kept from his Youth: And upon this our Saviour observes how hard it was for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God; *i. e.* into the State of the Gospel, (for so the Phrase signifies) as it then was in a poor and destitute Condition, so that it was only possible with God. He must engage his Omnipotence to conquer the Difficulty, to detach his Heart from its Earth, and lift up his Mind to the Hope and Relish of heavenly Things.

Now, tho' at this Time Men enter into the Kingdom of CHRIST, *i. e.* are made outward Members of the Church upon easier Terms as to the Affairs of this Life, yet to make a Part of CHRIST's invisible Body, can be purchased at no lower Rate than an Aptness and Readiness to resign every earthly Thing when it shall please God to call for them; or when the Interest of Piety and Goodness require it at our Hands.

This will prove an hard Task to the Well-endowed; for it is the Witchcraft of all Things here below, that though they perplex, and trouble, and satisfy not, yet they enamour us; we love them, tho' they hurt us; and tho' we are not pleased with having been deceived, yet, after every Interruption, we hasten again to the Deceiver. We find every new Acquisition, like the former, vanish in the Fruition; and that our Time is as tedious and our Life as uneasy when we have, as when we have not: But they are no sooner removed but we hasten towards them again, and, by Distance, they recover their Lustre in our Eyes.

Like those Meteors that shine by Reflection, give them their proper Distance and due Position, they are glorious and bright: If you come up with them you have nothing but an unwholsome Vapour; the Beauty's gone, and all that invited you lost, till you recede again; and then, if the Matter tarry long enough, and continue as it was, the lovely Appearance revives, and you are enticed again to be again deluded.

This is just the Case of all we admire here below, of all we doat on; 'tis all nothing in Fruition, yet give it the Advantage of a proper Distance, and immediately it becomes amiable, and strongly excites our Desires. Happy we, if we could see the Cheat once for all, and never stir again in these Matters, only to be again disappointed.

How easily might we leave this World, if we did but prize it as it deserves; but we are entertained, from Time to Time, with golden Dreams; and tho' when we come to handle and enjoy, we still awake and find nothing but Emptiness; yet, when the next
Dream

Dream comes, we are in the same Condition still, catch at the Shadow, and are again deceived.

What can cure this Distemper in the Soul? Nothing so surely as those sharp Dispensations of Providence, which snatch away these Deceits of the World; and, by reducing to a low Condition, take off that Varnish which deceives the Eyes of the Lofly, and hinders them from judging the Thing that is right. The Eye, looking up out of a Place of Darkeness, beholds the Stars at Noon Day, which are utterly hidden to those who stand in the glaring Light of the Sun; which great Ruler of the Day, though he shew all that is below himself, yet is remarkable for hiding all that is above.

However, therefore, Things may appear, it is our Interest to force our Feet from this Clay, this thick Clay; which, without some Violence, will be tenacious enough to hold us here, and bind us in its miry Shackles, so that we shall be unfit to march when the Universal General shall call us forth.

In what a miserable Condition are they, who, amidst the Care of disposing, getting, or keeping; amidst the Business and Hurry of Dispatch, and the many Concerns and Anxieties of an extensive Fortune, have scarce Leisure even to die; which, notwithstanding, to do like a Christian, is perhaps the only End for which we were born.

But to draw towards a Conclusion from the whole.

Of all these Goods of Fortune together then, it may be affirm'd, That they are utterly unable to help,

or remove, any of the great Evils Flesh and Blood is Heir to.

Who can bribe a Disease with Money? Or fright away Disasters with a swelling Title? And when God's Hand lies heavy upon us, what can a thousand Friends do but inclose our Bed, and disturb it with their Lamentations!

If God be pleased to wound our Conscience; to punish our Spirit with gloomy Thoughts and dismal Reflections; what profits it then that we can lie upon a Bed of Down, as gaudily inclosed and covered as we can imagine, if we must not rest there? Will these Things bring so much as Slumber to our Eyes? Much less will they quiet our distracted Minds. Our Senses then detest these vain Delights, when God's Arrows stick fast in us, and his Hand presses us sore.

Our Friends here we might expect most from; but how ineffectual often is what they can say, even tho' they admonish ever so prudently. The Distempers of our Minds, as well as Bodies, make us nauseate all Medicine, all Nourishment, and render the best Advice and Counsel mere Nonsense and Impertinence: For it is God that afflicts, who shall then help us? None but himself.

I think I need not tell you that none of these Goods are lasting; that Riches make themselves Wings; that Honours are fleeting; and that Friends are inconstant. All these Things are but for a Moment, and the Place where they were shall know them no more. They are all temporary as ourselves, or worse; nothing of them remaining long, but that Regret and Dis-

Disquiet, that Guilt in the Enjoyment of them has brought upon our Souls. These Considerations may serve to satisfy us, that Man at his best Estate, as to these Externals, surrounded with Riches, cloathed with Honours, encompassed with Friends, is yet, in all these Respects, altogether Vanity.

And now, may God grant that neither the Splendor of any Thing that is great, nor the Conceit of any Thing that is good in us, may any ways withdraw our Eyes from looking upon ourselves as sinful Dust and Ashes, and this through the Humility of thy Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R.



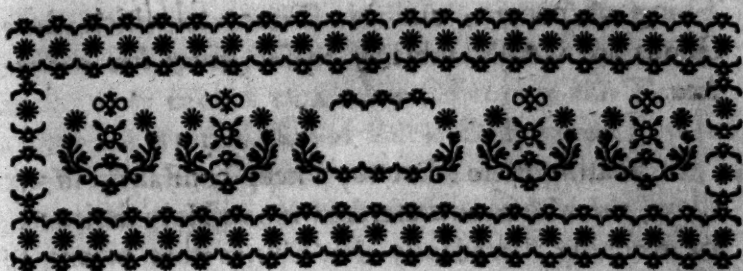
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And now, my dear friend, I have the honor to
acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th
inst. in relation to the matter of the
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And now, my dear friend, I have the honor to
acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th
inst. in relation to the matter of the
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Yours truly,





S E R M O N XV.

P S A L M cxliv. 4.

*Man is like to Vanity, his Days are as a Shadow
that passeth away.*

 **HATEVER** may be said in Disparagement of the Goods of Fortune; however true it is that Riches, and Honours, and Friends fail us in the Day of our Distress; yet surely the Goods of the Body will afford us some valuable Consolation; Health and Strength, and Beauty, are Advantages upon which Hope in this Life may reasonably be grounded.

It may not be amiss to try the whole Strength of these Pretensions, and see a little what Sort of a Figure Man makes when in Possession of these Goods of the Body; and, upon Examination, we shall find them prove like the rest of his Accomplishments, good for little; and that he has nothing really by Nature, either within or without, that can exempt him from the Censure of the Text: He is like a
Thing

Thing of naught, and his Time, to which these Goods are wholly subject, *passeth away like a Shadow.*

In treating these Matters, I keep constantly in my View, the Methods prescribed me in Holy Scripture, for teaching successfully the Things that belong to the Kingdom of Heaven; where the Spirit ever humbles before he exalts; empties before he fills; and cuts off every Hope in this Life, before he gives any Assurance of its being saved to Life Eternal.

And indeed the Nature of the Thing requires such Manner of Proceeding; for none are able to see the Value of those Heavenly Promises that God has made to Mankind in his Son, but those who are disposed to forsake all, that they may follow him. For which Reason I make it my Business, on every Occasion that fairly offers, to depreciate, and sink in our Esteem, the Value of every earthly Thing; assuredly knowing, that if our Hearts be joined by Love to the Things of the World, we cannot answer the Call of God, or come unto CHRIST to be saved, *who fills only the Hungry with his good Things; but the Rich he sends empty away.*

Let us then, thus minded, pursue the Matter before us, and examine, with Freedom, the Value of those Goods that in anywise belong to our bodily Nature.

It must be confessed that they are more properly our own, than any Thing Fortune pretends to bestow; they make a Part of our natural Accomplishments, and by our superior Care and Solitude to
embellish

embellish them, rather than those of the Mind, we shew we esteem them the best we have : Notwithstanding they cannot escape the Censure of the Text, for they are with Man, and all his Endowments, like unto Vanity ; and indeed never more so than when they are most regarded and most trusted in.

Nor can it be otherwise ; for if the Body itself be such as it is, so subject to Crosses and Miseries, Diseases and Death, we cannot with any Reason expect that what belongs to it should be exempt from its Disasters. It is of so short Continuance, so fading and so uncertain, that it is Folly to hope or trust in any Advantage it possesses : It perishes every Day, and tho' it does renew itself, yet it is still with Disadvantage ; we recover not so much as we lost ; we bear still our Fate about us, and die, even because we live. Thus, in the Midst of Life, we are in Death.

We cannot expect any great Measure of Perfection in a Being, whose very Nature is a Contradiction to Being : For, are not our Bodies in a perpetual Change ? Where some Parts go away, and others come into their Places, and the Texture is altered every Moment.

We, in the mean Time, fancy ourselves permanent and firm ; the same To-day we were Yesterday : For the Change is insensible, and we lose ourselves we know not how, nor when.

We pass away, as the Text informs us, *like a Shadow*, and that we perceive not to alter as it goes, but at last we see that it has gone, gained a new Place,

Place, and forfook the old one: Thus our Sun declines swiftly, and our Day is short; and yet we know not that it is so till it is gone, and leaves us Weakness and Grief, Repentance and Sorrow for what is past, and Fear for what is yet to come.— This is the Fruit of our Nature, this is the Recompence of all our Labour under the Sun.

Our Life is like a Summer's Stream; the old Water passeth away, and new comes in its Place, but still less than before; till, at length, by unheeded Degrees, the Stream quite dries up, and leaves the Channel as thirsty as its Neighbour Earth.

Thus, too, we bring our Years to an End, even as it were a Tale that is told.

But that we may see the Vanity of the Body more distinctly; let us consider the several Advantages of it separately and singly. And they are these three,

Health, Strength, and Beauty.

Upon each of which I shall make a few Observations in their Order.

And *first*, for Health. This is indeed the Foundation of all our other Enjoyments; that without which our Life is but a continual Death; and therefore if in any Part of our corporeal Nature, in this we might have Hope. But nothing can be more uncertain, nothing more unsettled than this: A little Heat, or a little Cold; an Ague or a Fever, or almost any Thing destroys it. How is it hurt by our own Intemperance; and how many have utterly de-

destroyed it by that which they esteemed its choicest Fruit, a Power it gives them of indulging themselves. And this indeed is common to all bodily Pleasures, that they destroy their own Foundation.

When we strive to enjoy them more than ordinary, we cease to enjoy them at all; and then what, in this Particular, can make us happy, when an Excess of this we call Happiness makes us wretched; and too much Pleasure, besides the Sin of it, turns to Nauseousness and Misery itself?

For what is Intemperance, but a too plentiful Enjoyment of what we call Good? And what is a more constant Seminary of Disease than that? Thus we eat and drink for Enjoyment, and perish by it; we ruin our Body by pampering it; and whilst we reap the Fruit of Health, we injure or destroy the very Root of it. The Happiness therefore that can arise from this Quarter can be but little; but who can engage even for that little? For Distempers are the Fault of our Nature, as well as ourselves or our Vices; and tho' we have not sinned in this Kind, yet we die.

How great then is the Vanity of all those who seek their Consolation from sensual Delights, which stand upon so slight a Basis as bodily Health; which when they rise too high, and press too hard upon it, first shrinks under its own Burden, and, at length, falls under the Weight of its own Productions.

Whither then shall we flee, if we thus fail ourselves! Or what Refuge can we take in a Body whose Wounds and Weaknesses are in itself? Let
ex-

external Evils spare us, as much as we could desire, yet how shall we provide against innate Misery? How! Except we could change our Nature, and make that firm and stable which the Creator has formed to a perpetual Flux and Inconstancy.

Had we Leisure to pursue this Matter further, it might be demonstrated that bodily Health is not capable of making any Creature happy; nay, it would not have so much as a Place in our Understandings, were it not for Sickness and Pain, which not only illustrate, but give it its very Being. It might be shewn likewise, that if its Nature were never so excellent, yet that we scarce ever have it in Perfection: And that if we had, still the Advantage of it would be lost in that Series of Discontent and Disturbance of Mind, that cross Accidents are everlastingly bringing upon us.

This surely is enough to convince us of the Vanity of this best of bodily Perfections, and make us sincerely confess, That there is no Health in us, except thou, O LORD, have Mercy upon us.

In GOD alone is my Health and my Glory; he is the Rock of my Might, and in him must we trust for our Health and Salvation.

Let us now, in the *second* Place, take a View of that other bodily Good, Strength. Now this Accomplishment, one would think, no one would value themselves highly upon, were it only that the Brute Creation have it in a greater Measure than Mankind. The Elephant or Whale are a sufficient Disgrace to all human Force, and a Bar to all his Confidence in this
Par-

Particular. It was a Kind of Sarcasm to human Nature, when GOD bid *Job* gird himself with that Strength, of which he had so inconsiderable a Portion.

If Strength were to be the Criterion of earthly Dominion, Man, instead of being Lord over GOD's Works, would be reduced to a State of Servitude to almost all of them, being more inconsiderable in this Particular, than most Creatures of the same Bulk with us; as if GOD designed, by this small Portion, to convince us, that this was not to be our Excellence: And if, after this plain Admonition, we boast and magnify ourselves on its Account, we contradict palpably the Temper of our Nature, and the Disposition of our Creator.

Whatever therefore we may be in other Things, in this we certainly are nothing.

And yet Men are apt to pride themselves in the slight Advantage of a little Disproportion from each other in this Matter: And then the next Thing is to put to the Trial, and if they perish in the Experiment, they may thank themselves; for who required this at their Hands?

For this is clear, that he who has least Strength is able, by Cunning, to do Mischief; and he that has most, is in nowise able to secure himself from it.

Besides that Aptness to injure our Neighbour, which proceeds usually from thinking ourselves abundantly

dantly able, is no small Disparagement to the Qualification ; it being better for us at any Time to be weak, than able only to do Mischief.

Thus is our Strength infirm and small, and sometimes mischievous also ; add to this, that it yields to the slightest bodily Disaster, and, in many Diseases, acts wholly against its Master. And what a Figure does the strong Man make, when a little Pain or Sickness affixes him to his Bed, and makes him beholden to others for the least Offices of Humanity ?

Who that then sees them pale, and weak, and trembling, would fancy that they were the Creatures that boasted in their Strength, and took not God for their Confidence.

I shall close this Head with just reminding you of the Scripture History of *Sampson*, the great Figure of all human Force ; and let the wretched Consequences of his great Strength, when the Spirit of the LORD was departed from him, admonish us all to put no Confidence in this Arm of the Flesh ; for in the LORD JEHOVAH is our Strength ; here alone can we trust and never be afraid.

I come now to consider the *third* bodily Advantage, which is Beauty.

It were inconceivable, (but that Experience convinces us that so it may be) that rational Creatures should think highly of themselves, so as even to forget their Dependence upon God or Man upon Account of that Gloss, that Paint, that Varnish of Mortality, which is so far from securing from Evil of any Kind,
that

that it pretends to no such Thing. All it aims at is to excite Admiration, or something worse, in the Beholder's Eye, and then to feed the Vanity of the Heart with reflecting upon this Power : So that all the Care, and Trouble, and Expence that it costs to prepare, to preserve, and to set it forth, is all to be repaid, it seems, in the Sacrifice it makes to that self-adoring Principle, which is the most base and vicious Part of our fallen Nature.

But, in Truth, this Portion of human Infirmary becomes safe under the Mask of its own Deformity, and is the less apprehended and the less guarded against, because it will not bear the Light ; because it is even too ugly to be exposed.

Let us therefore endeavour to abandon at once all Confidence in this shewy Perfection of the Body ; and turn away our Eyes that we may see the true Beauties of the Mind, which are not like this, mere Paint and Gloss, but something solid and great, that will bear the Test of sober Judgment, and endure the severest Examination of Truth itself ; that will exercise our Understanding, and, by exercising, improve and better it, which no bodily Decorum can do. This is that Beauty whither our Eyes and Affections should be directed ; and the rather, because with God's Assistance, of this Kind we may be all Partakers ; none need to be deformed here, but those who choose to be so.

Forget then thy own People, and thy Father's House, i. e. The corrupted Nature from whence thou art sprung, so shall the King have Pleasure in thy Beauty, for he is thy LORD GOD, and worship thou him.

Having thus attempted to shew the Vanity of these three Goods of the Body, Health, Strength, and Beauty, I shall now endeavour to raise a few useful Reflections from the whole, and have done.

Since then Man, in all these Things, is like unto Vanity; a Creature of a Day, which too passeth away like a Shadow, it may not be amiss for him to view himself in this Glass of Truth, which flatters not, but represents him evil as he is. If he would know the Reality of his Nature, let him look upon himself under the Disadvantage of a Disease, or old Age; Youth and Strength are apt to think these Things far from them; but this, like the rest of their gay Reflections, is a Mistake; the Seeds of our Destruction are born within us, and are actually taking Root there, in the very Spring and Verdure of Life. All is then fitting up only to be tumbled down again; and accordingly our Souls, in a little while, become tired of daubing and patching up its ruinous and rotten Habitation, knowing that it must be soon forced out of its falling Mansion. When the Cracks of the Walls can no more be cemented, and the whole Building becomes a ruinous Heap: When, I say, our Death shall cure our Distempers, and supercede, according to the Proverb, the Labour of the Physician: Let us present that pale and ghastly Visage that shall affright the surviving Spectators, and make them tremble at what themselves must be: Let us present, I say, these dismal Qualities to our yet vigorous Thoughts, and learn from thence, that nothing can be high that can fall thus low.

Let us think of that Chill which shall at first seize upon our Limbs, and take, as it were, the Out-works of

of Nature; next ascend to the Vitals, and there take the whole Fortrefs; our Spirits ever and anon turning Head, and disputing every Pass in vain! Alas, there can be no Rescue. Corruption is its Principle, and Destruction is its End. LORD, what is Man that thou regardest him! When thou takest away his Breath he shall die and return to his Dust, where Posterity shall forget him.

In the mean Time he swells and vaunts himself over in one Accomplishment or another, and raises little Tumults, and heaps up Provision; he disputes and quarrels, and sometimes reasons, but thinks not that this shall be his End: That all those Things he is so anxious to procure shall be taken from him, and all his Labour, except what is in the LORD, shall be in vain.

The Wise Man has sent the Sluggard to the Ant for Instruction, but we might send the over-busy Part of Mankind to be schooled likewise by these exact Imitators of human Industry. We see them labour and toil, and, with vast Pains and Carefulness, making Provision for the Times that are to come; and we can smile at their contemptible Endeavours, and despise their anxious Care for the future, when a little Water might destroy them, or an unwary Foot crush them to Pieces.

And yet just like these Creatures are we ourselves; we labour and toil too but for a little Profit, and a deal of Trouble do we take to no Purpose at all; so that were superior Beings to look down upon the busy World, they must conclude that God had taken away

our Understanding, and left us to toil for Trifles that we were never like to enjoy.

It would be some little Excuse for our unmeasurable Desires, could their Objects continue as long as ourselves; but in a moderate Age we outlive our Taste, and could sometimes wish for Death before it comes, though it tarry not.

This Sunshine that so cheers us for a while, and the Light of which it is so pleasant for the Eyes to behold, does not last out to the End of our short Day, but is almost ever under a Cloud; and if it be not, it scorches oftener than it agreeably warms us. Nothing hits us exactly; we are all distemper'd; Life itself is a Disease; and no Change of Place, or Condition, can in anywise mend our Case, for in our Nature is the Root of our Discontent: In vain therefore we fly the Stroke, when the Arrow sticks fast in our Side; in vain we shun the infected Place, when the Malignancy circulates in our Veins. Our Bodies, to which these Things belong, are ever changing, and consequently our Inclinations and Affections must change with them; and then what can be excellent, what worthy our Concern, that is lodged under the Influence of such a Compound of Frailty and Corruption, of Sin and Death?

In short; our mortal Body is a continual Fountain of Disquiet; it perpetuates Dissatisfaction; it enslaves the Soul, and makes our Life all troublesome and uneasy; and forces all our Faculties to labour in vain.

Thus Man walks in a vain Shadow, and disquiets himself for nought: He hunts for bodily Pleasure, but finds

finds it not ; but, in its Stead, Regret and an uninterrupted Chain of Disappointment.

GOD grant that these Considerations may incline us to look out for some better Habitation ; that when this earthly Tabernacle shall be dissolved, we may be cloathed upon with that House from Heaven, which is the Gift of GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD ; and to whom therefore, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

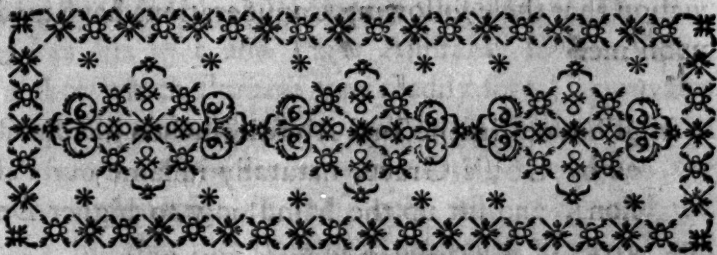
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S E R M O N XVI.

PSALM xciv. II.

*The LORD knoweth the Thoughts of Man, that
they are Vanity.*

 **I** T would be happy for him if he understood as much of himself, it would be of more Use to him than all his other Knowledge put together; for it would at once deliver him from those many Errors and Sins, to which, by leaning upon his own Understanding, he is daily exposed.

However difficult, therefore, it may be to persuade him into this Truth; how hard a Task soever it may prove to humble the proud Reasoner of this World, and make him confess that his Wisdom is utter Foolishness with God, and that the high-priz'd Goods of his Mind are but like the rest of his natural Endowments, merely Vanity; yet I shall be bold in the LORD, for the Sake of the Importance of this Matter, to attempt it; and that under the powerful Con-
viction

viction that these following Considerations have made upon me.

I. That our intellectual Abilities, when not directed by GOD's Grace, naturally inflame our Passions, and lift up the Mind only to higher Degrees of Vice and Vanity.

II. That they are subject to all the Infirmities of the Body, and therefore like to be impaired, or taken from us, when we stand in most Need of their Assistance. And this will lead me,

III. To point out that Wisdom which is from above, and which is the Gift of GOD through JESUS CHRIST, as the only Shield he has appointed to defend us against all our Adversaries, whether ghostly or bodily.

First, then, I am to shew that our intellectual Abilities, when not directed by Grace, naturally inflame our Passions, and lift up our Mind only to higher Degrees of Vice and Vanity.

And, indeed, who is there almost among Mankind, in Possession of these Endowments, who has not made an ill Use of them? They are commonly like Pearls among Swine; we trample them under-foot, *i. e.* make them serve to base Purposes, and not seldom turn again and rend the Mercy and Goodness of that GOD that gave them.

How much better would it be for us then to fit in the lowest Room of humble Ignorance, with the Children of Humility, than at any Time to be criminally

minally subtle, or profanely ingenious? He that makes his Wit and Parts Assistants to his Vices, (and to which Purpose they readily serve) aggravates every Crime; sins continually against the Light of Reason and Conscience, and entitles himself to the many Stripes due to those only who knew and did not: So that this greater Measure of Reason, and superior Pitch of Wisdom and Knowledge, without an equal Portion of Grace to manage them, gives us only the Pre-eminence of a greater Condemnation, and the sad Prerogative of being first in Punishment, as we were first in Sin.

But that I may not be thought to bring so heavy a Charge against this distinguishing Faculty of human Kind, and have not Matter sufficient to support it, I shall therefore point out some of those particular Evils into which Brightness of Parts, and Superiority of Genius, are apt to lead their Owners. And, upon this Inspection, we may think that the Text deals very tenderly with these Matters, in calling them Vanity, and nothing worse. For,

1st, They bend the Mind to Profaneness towards God.

2^{dly}, To the Contempt and Abuse of our more ignorant Neighbour.

3^{dly}, They are subservient to Ambition, and the Disturbance of the World.

4^{thly}, They produce fruitless Notions and everlasting Doubts. And

5^{thly},

5thly, and *lastly*, They heighten our Desires for earthly Things.

1st, then, These Endowments have a natural Tendency to Profaneness.

Now though, at first View, it may appear preposterous that Reason should incline the Heart to dishonour that God, to whose Goodness it owes even the Ability to offend him, yet is there scarce any Thing that inclines a Man more to this Crime, than what the World esteem Wit and Quickness of Parts: That is, a Faculty of talking sharply, and arguing acutely. So that I am not, in anywise, speaking against right Reason, which always disposes the Mind to submit to the Will of God; that having almost lost its Reputation, by the shining of this more glittering, but more empty, Perfection of the natural Man. Of this Sort are they who would rather lose the Favour of God, than the Honour of being thought ingenious. These make the most serious Things imaginable the Subject of their Mirth, to entertain, and thereby procure, the Applauses of a vicious and pleasure-taking World; being resolved together to chase away the Fear of Futurity, and not suffer it to disturb or interrupt the Enjoyment of the present: Hence a slight Dash of their Fancy serves to elude the Authority of all that's serious or sacred. Thus they resist Evil; and this is the Shield against Regret, and those melancholy Thoughts which come arm'd with the whole Strength of Nature, and the greater Force of the Divine Attestation.

These are the Men, who are able to abuse those who would remind them of their Duty, and are always

ways provided with an uncharitable Retort, and a smart Reflection still upon that Doctrine that most disallows that Practice: And, which is worst of all, these are the Men who, once engaged in Evil, are the most irreclaimable, and the most obstinate in the Way of Destruction. That slight Way of eluding every Thing that occurs tending to their Amendment, making them deaf to all Reproof; whether proceeding from the Care of Friends without, or from the Reflection of their own Conscience from within. The steady Satisfaction and Pleasure that redounds to their own Fancy, from keeping their Eyes ever fix'd upon this gaudy Apparel of the Mind, is a powerful Bar to any Reformation, and rather fit to make them much more the Children of Hell, than they could have otherwise been. But lest this should be thought the Fault of a superficial Kind of Wit, which is one of the lowest Accomplishments of the Mind, it is necessary here to observe, that the most noble and exalted Understandings have miscarried this Way; some of which have even reason'd themselves out of their Hope in CHRIST; and indeed seldom any of the meaner Capacities have been Atheistically or Deistically inclined: Men begin to be so when they suppose themselves able to solve all the Phænomena of Nature, without the Intervention of God's Providence; and that their Reason is sufficient to all Things requisite, without the Help of a Mediator or Redeemer. Thus do our mental Abilities, by ridding us of the Fear of God, and the Hope of Life in his Son, serve to little else but to exalt Folly, and to lift up the Mind to higher Degrees of Vice and Vanity. But,

2dly, Another Disadvantage of these Kind of Abilities is, that they betray us into the Contempt and Abuse

Abuse of our more ignorant Neighbour: For these are the Men who usually sit in the Seat of the Scorners; nor is it probable that they should spare their Brother, who are so injurious to their God.

Now, tho' the Fear of Ill, or Hope of Gain, may sometimes restrain, and teach this Humour Caution, yet it falls the heavier generally upon the Absent and the Weak; it must have Vent. Hence the least Faults of such are blown up, and shewn in all those Colours of Disadvantage that abusive Wit can cloath any Thing withall; for a sharp Sentence, or a ridiculous Allusion, can make Prudence itself look silly; how then shall the Actions of the Weak stand before a railing Artist? It was one of the greatest Troubles of that most patient of Men, that the Drunkards made Songs upon him; and it is now justly esteem'd the greatest of Injuries to have the Lash of private Detraction spread and perpetuated by the Severity of an ingenious Satyre: For we are mistaken if we fancy we are the less injurious for being wittily so; 'tis this false Spirit that makes Abuse relished, and that gives a Gust to Calumny. Rhetoric sometimes does the Office of every Thing else; and the World is so intent upon its being Smartly said, that they have no Leisure to examine whether it be true or not.

In the mean while the unhappy Sufferer is rendered odious, or contemptible, which is the next Step commonly to his Ruin: And this is yet more criminal when it falls not upon the Vice, but upon the Person; not upon the Irregularity of the Will, but upon the Defects of the Understanding; in which yet Man has no more Power, than he has to be his own Creator: And therefore whoever reproaches his Brother on account of his natural Weaknesses and Imperfections,

tions, really reproaches his Maker; and acts as unjustly and unreasonably, as if he should reflect upon him for not having been better or more nobly born.

There is still a lower Class of Wits, who can make Sport with the Deformity of Men's Bodies; and exercise their Talent of Railery upon the Poverty and other Miseries of their Neighbour, which they ought to have relieved. This is such an Issue of our Head-piece as is something worse than Vanity, and richly deserves the Character of Brutish Wickedness. And God's Threat, *That he will laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh*, is nothing too severe towards those who can make the serious Evils of others the Subject of their Mirth, and a Laughing-Matter of the Calamities of human Life; who can delight to revile those whom God hath afflicted, and feel Satisfaction in loading a low Condition with Obloquy and Scorn: And yet these are your Great Wits, and so highly esteemed! But it seems every Thing that belongs to us must be like us; partake of our Vileness, and be no better than ourselves.

3dly, Let us now add here to our great natural Parts, the Knowledge of Arts and Sciences, and then we shall find a third and still more dangerous Effect from them: Now they begin, with the Addition of this fresh Force, to administer to Ambition, and to the Disturbance of the World: For you shall hardly find any Author of Schism, or Heresy, but such extraordinary Persons; the rest are content with the beaten Path. These, as they have no common Intellects, so neither are they to be satisfied with common Notions, however true. They must have something
of

of their own; and as they are exempt from the Multitude by their Abilities, so will they farther exempt themselves by their Sentiments. These are the Men who chuse rather to be distinguished by their Errors, and by leading others into them, than pass undistinguished with their Brethren. Thus they do Mischief, by being able to do Good; and approve themselves highly learned, by being able mightily to deceive. Thus is human Nature, however endowed, all of a Piece; and till it sink into nothing, as it were, before GOD, it can no better be: But if this happen not, and we suffer not our Parts to injure or disturb our Neighbour; yet

A 4th Fault of them is, that they produce no real Goodness, but fruitless Notions merely. This is indeed a Mischief only to ourselves; but to us it is a fore Evil that, instead of combating and subduing our natural Corruptions, and assuring our Hearts before GOD, we have been engaged in a Sea of Doubts and everlasting Disputations, whence we can never hope to get out, but by retreating. All our Labour and Toil herein must be counted Loss, or worse, Dross and Dung, before we can return into the Paths of Truth and Righteousness.

The Wise Man tells us, *that in much Knowledge there is much Sorrow*; and all that are conversant in these Matters know it from their own Experience. We have known many content with their Ignorance, but I believe none ever were with their Knowledge. We gain nothing here by our seeming Acquisitions, but Delusion; 'tis all nothing but solemn trifling; Baits for vain Curiosity, and no more. But as dissatisfactory

tisfactory as our human Knowledge and Learning may be, they will,

5thly, Serve to make us wordly minded, and heighten our Desires after earthly Things, which is the last Evil I have to reproach them withall. And of this we may be convinced in a few Words; it being obvious that nothing increases Self-liking and personal Value, like the Consciousness of superior Understanding and Parts: And this gives the Mind a Kind of Right and Title to superior Possession. All that think they deserve, think they ought to have; and this regularly sets all the Faculties at Work to procure. Hereby are they led into the Exercise of wicked Cunning, and all the Arts of Fraud and Deceit, which is the basest Abuse that Sense and Reason brings upon us: For thus Men are deceived by their own Policy, and taken in their own Craftiness: They spread the Net to catch the World, and entangle in it their own Souls.

But all this may be said to respect the Abuse, and not the Use, of our mental Abilities: I shall therefore now proceed to shew, very briefly, under

My *second* general Head, That there is no Ground here for Trust or Confidence; inasmuch as the Strength of the Mind is subject to all the Infirmities of the Body, and therefore like to be impaired, or taken from us, when we stand most in need of its Assistance.

Suppose then that we abuse not these Abilities, by affronting God, or injuring our Neighbour; suppose that we neither disturb the Public with our odd Opinions,

nions, nor suffer them to evaporate in fruitless Notions, nor debase them by covetous Practices; yet this single Circumstance, that they are closely connected with the Frailties of the Body, is sufficient to make them participate of the common Fate, and prove the Thoughts of Man to be, like the rest of his natural Faculties, mere Vanity.

This whole Matter we find ready set forth to our Hand in the Character of *Job*. It was in the Management of this Point that the cunning Foe of Mankind thought to vanquish the Soul of that Miracle of Patience. *Touch now*, says he to the Almighty, *his Body, and he shall curse thee to thy Face*. Though his Mind bear up patiently under the Spoiling of his Goods, the Consumption of his Cattle, the Loss of his Servants, and the Death of his Children, yet his Patience, so tried, still shrunk under the Pressures of a Disease; and the Wrath of Nature, when it made its nearest Approaches and took hold of his Person, removed from him that exact Temper of Submission to God's Dispensations, and Resignation of himself to the Will of the Creator, as made him break out into that pathetical Curse of his Nativity, and those many other expostulatory Discourses, which seem, as to the several Parts of them, to have had a greater Share of his Passion than his Reason. He then did multiply Words without Knowledge, that we may not expect to have our Reason entire, when our Bodies are broken with Disease and Pain; for to his Example in this Matter are we referred. So that when a Man has spent his Life in quest of Knowledge, and exalted his Nature as far as the Treasure of these intellectual Riches can carry it, behold the Hand of Nature comes upon him in the Shape of a Disease, and takes from him

him all his Ability, and the Fruits of it together; leaving him nothing better in their Stead than Stupor and Insensibility, if not Sorrow and Distraction of Mind.

This therefore is also Vanity; it is even a sore Evil that I have seen under the Sun, that Man walks in a vain Shadow, and disquieteth himself for nought; that he heaps up these Kind of Riches of the Mind, and knows that no Body shall enjoy them: They are taken from himself when he most wants them, and descend not to his Posterity; they die before him, and leave him nothing in which he shall acquiesce: For not only Death, but its Forerunner, a Disease, can equal him with the stupidest Mortal, and lay his Wisdom, before it does his Body, in the Dust.

This discovers the Nakedness of our Nature, and makes our Shame conspicuous if we trust in these Things, even in Things which cannot help, but perish in the Using as well as in the Abuse.

Thus does the Man die before the Body, and the intellectual Life extinguish in the Midst of the natural: Thus does he cease to be rational before he ceases to live, and his last End is beneath any other Period of his Existence: For the Wise not only die as well as the Foolish, but become like him too before his Dissolution; and finds often the End of his distinguished Abilities much sooner than the End of his Days.

In this wretched State of Despondence, when all Hope in ourselves is taken away, the Gospel-Promises

enter with Welcome; and point out, as I purposed to shew,

In the *third* and *last* Place, That Wisdom which is from above, and which is the Gift of GOD through JESUS CHRIST, as the only Shield that can defend us from all our Adversaries, whether ghostly or bodily.

For the Gifts and Promises of GOD in CHRIST are without Repentance; that is, they are fix'd and unchangeable as their Author; they are the very Power of GOD unto Salvation: They are therefore subject to no Frailty either of Body or Mind, neither can the Torments of Malice or Misfortune touch them: They flourish and bring forth Fruit to Life Eternal, in Sicknes and Poverty as well as in Health and Plenty. Job, when instructed by this Heavenly Wisdom to see and confess his own Vileness and Vanity, could be good, and pious, and patient, amidst the Robbery of the *Sabeans*, the Fire from Heaven, his Children's Death, his Wife's Folly, and even his own personal Disorders. His bodily Sufferings could not so far influence his Mind, thus assisted by Grace, as to make it like itself, ulcerous and unsightly; this Virtue which flows from the Body of CHRIST, when touched by Faith, has a stronger Basis than Satan's Malice can shake or undermine. Thus help'd from above, he could, contrary to the Insinuation of his Accuser, even in this World, serve GOD for nought, and be content to stay till hereafter for the Recompence of Reward. He could hope beyond Death, and trust that GOD that killed him: And so might we too, if we could be persuaded to seek for Strength only where he found it. This would open our Lips, and enable us to say, with the Apostle, *What shall*
sepa-

*separate us from the Love of CHRIST? Shall Tribulation, or Anguish, or Persecution, or Death, or Life, or Things present, or Things to come! Nothing of this could, if we had Faith and Hope: No, not all the Terrors of afflicted Goodness, nor all the Enticements of prosperous Wickedness; not any Hopes or Fears for the future, nor any Enjoyments or Sufferings for the present, could make either GOD love us, or we him, less. With his Presence the meanest Cottage, nay, the open and inhospitable Field, is all one with the most splendid Palace: His Eye is not nauseated, or removed from us, when we are the most unsightly Objects: Nor can any Thing interpose betwixt GOD and our Souls, and hinder these good Things from us, but Self-righteousness and Self-confidence. All of this Kind has a Mixture of our fallen Nature in it, and renders us and our Actions all impure before GOD. Let our Wheat be of the cleanest Seed, there will be Tares; and such as we have no Power to pluck up, separate, or consume. *There is none righteous, no, not one.* Hence our very Prayers would be Sin, offered in our own Names, did not he who redeems us sanctify them also: So that all Mankind are now reduced to this only Refuge—The Mercy of GOD and the Merits of CHRIST.*

And happy is it for us that we have such a Stay for our Frailty: For learn only to know the Rock of your Strength; understand and confess that it is he that saves us, and not we ourselves, and, lo! all shall be well.

And do thou, O GOD, we beseech thee, look even upon our Goodness with Mercy, and be not exact to mark what is done amiss. Thou knowest our Nature,

ture, and none of our Failings are hid from thee. Remember then that we are but Dust; and, since we are light upon the Weights, supply all our Wants out of the Riches of thy Fulness, thro' the Merits of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-





S E R M O N XVII.

P S A L M lxxi. 6.

By thee have I been holden up from the Womb :

Or, as it is rendered in the common Translation, at
the fifth Verse of the same Psalm :

*Through thee have I been holden up ever since I was
born : Thou art he that took me out of my Mother's
Womb, my Praise shall be always of thee.*



READ the whole Psalm through : For, when taken together, it exhibits to our View a most lively and exact Picture of the Imbecility or Nothingness of all human Kind, when destitute or deprived of the Presence and Power of God. And what I have prepared to deliver upon this useful and important Subject, may be look'd upon rather as a Comment upon the whole Psalm, than as an Exposition of this little Portion of it which I have singled out for my Text.

When a Man is fallen from his Hope and Trust in God, and begins to trust in his own Heart, and to have Confidence in the Flesh, as *St. Paul* expresses it, he has then lost out of his Nature all that was valuable in it: Insomuch as that a Man of Understanding would not covet to live an Hour, after the Sense of his Dependence upon his Creator was extinguished in his Soul.

Such Sentiments and such Expressions made *David* appear, as he tells us, as a Monster unto many; nevertheless he abides by it, *his sure Trust is only in the LORD.*

Had we Inclination or Ability to take an exact Inventory of all our natural or acquired Goods, and consider minutely every one of our fancied Perfections and trifling Endowments, whether belonging to Soul, or Body, or Fortune: Were we to pass thro' all the several Accomplishments human Nature is capable of, and examine attentively every Spark in him that pretends to look like real and substantial Goodness, we should find ourselves utterly disappointed in our Search; and that Mankind are, by Nature, really possessed of nothing, either within or without, upon which they can reasonably ground either Pride or Self-sufficiency.

He is of himself, and when without God in the World, a mere compound of Sin and Misery, Folly and Vexation, Contradiction and Wretchedness; and all his Goods put together, as they are nothing to God, so are they little better to himself.

Solomon is the Scripture-Character, set at the Head of every Thing of this Sort; and if this wisest and
greatest

greatest of Princes, in the Midst of all his Glory, could have his Heart turned aside, and be induced to put his Trust in a Lye ; and after his magnificent Dedication of a Temple to the Living God, could, in his riper Years, rear up an Idol in a Corner, and worship the Work of his own Hands ; what shall be esteemed too absurd for the Generality of Mankind to fall into, whose mental Abilities are of a far inferior Make, and whose Actions are yet of a much baser Alloy.

These Things should be frequently inculcated, inasmuch as they are the only Considerations that have any Tendency to keep under that little proud aspiring Spirit, so common to all the Sons and Daughters of *Adam* ; and in which, I do verily believe, he derives down the Curse of the Fall to his latest Posterity ; and the rather, because this Spirit finds no Cure but in that Humility which is to be learned only of CHRIST, who is the redeeming Power of God ; and because it is directly opposite to the very Temper and Design of Christianity, as well as contrary to every Circumstance of our present Manner of Existence.

This notwithstanding, Men are every Hour fomenting and increasing, according to the Fashion of this World, by haughty and odious Comparisons, which they are ever making between themselves and their Neighbours, with respect to these Marks of Distinction, these outwardly shewy, but really vain and trifling, Excellencies.

But I may not let the Matter rest thus in Generals, having several particular and useful Observations

servations to offer to your Consideration ; and which may, by the Grace GOD, bring us to a more Christian Disposition, and a more charitable Frame of Mind, than is usually to be found in the now Christian, but still wicked, World ; and from whence we may still farther collect the Vanity of our own Nature, and be induced to cry out with the Psalmist in the Words of the Text,—*Through thee have I been holden up ever since I was born : Thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Womb, my Praise shall be always of thee.*

To this Purpose then, these two following Considerations may likely serve, viz.

I. That we are, in every Point of our Existence, merely dependent Beings. And

II. That he on whom we depend has trusted no such Power in our Hands, as will be sufficient to help and defend us in any great Distress, whether of Body or Soul.

III. To these I shall add a few practical Inferences, and have done.

First, then, I am to shew that we are, in every Point of our Existence, merely dependent Beings, and that all our Sufficiency is of GOD.

In him is the Well of Life, and in his Light alone can we hope to see Light.

It was he that at first made us, and that after the Counsel of his own Will ; we had here no Kind of Choice, but were merely as Clay in the Hand of the

the Potter. Had we contributed in anywise to our own Creation, there might have been some Ground for Thoughts that proceed from a Sense of our own Worth and Power; we should, at least, have been Creatures who had some Share in ourselves by Right of Nature. But now that even this Pretence is taken from us, and that our whole Souls and Bodies, and all the Issues of them, come from another Power, and are but lent, and to be repaid; what have we then left in which we might pride ourselves? We have nothing strictly of our own, unless it be the Power of abusing the manifold Gifts of God; and, in this Respect, we have really less than at first was committed to our Charge: For hereby we have lost a Portion of our native Innocence and Simplicity, and as naked as we came into this World, in this Particular, carry less out than we brought into it. So far are we from adding any Thing to our Store, that we cannot keep it entire; so far from increasing the Number of our Talents by Trade, that our Napkin has not been sufficient to keep the one Talent we have received, from being soil'd by the Earth in which we choose to hide it.

So that we have not only nothing but what we have received, but we have not all that we have received; by long trafficking in the World, the Tempter and our own Lusts have found Means to rob and to spoil us of the little Stock we had to set up withall: We leave a Part of this behind us, and lose it amidst the Multitude of Business and the Variety of our Actions, amidst the Cares and Pleasures of this Life; and every Day almost, during our Subjection to the Vanity of Time, serves to waste our Innocence and Simplicity, and we recover it not again.

But

But still farther; as we wholly depend on GOD for the Manner of our Creation, so likewise for that of our Preservation; we are no more able to subsist ourselves than we were to make ourselves; we require a constant Support from without, and, unless that continue, we regularly fall into Dust, or rather sink into nothing. *It is in him we live, and move, and have our Being; it is his Power that sustains; it is his Goodness that preserves; it is by his Word, and not by Bread alone, that Man lives, says Moses; and it is by the same Word, says St. Paul, that all Things consist.*

Even upon the common Principles of human Knowledge and Experience, we find a Want of a continual Influence for our Continuation, and every Breath we draw from without proves it. Thus, like the meanest of human Artifices, we cannot endure without the Presence of the Artificer, conferring new Motions to the decayed Powers, and putting in Repair what even a little Tract of Time has displaced and disordered.

In short; all the whole Earth, and all that therein is, is upheld perpetually by the same Hand that made and fashioned it; the Divine Energy does, as it were, hourly stimulate and awaken the Deadness of outward Nature; it overcomes the sluggish Frailty of passive Matter, and makes Things live and last awhile in spite of their Mortality.

And this is so far true, that probably enough, could we live a Day by our own inherent Virtue, we might live for ever also by the same.

Of

Of thy own, says the Psalmist, at the Dedication of his magnificent Preparations for the Temple, *of thy own have we given thee.* This was so very true, that even the Will to do that pious Work was God's own too; nay, the very Disposition to confess it, was inspired by him, from whom all holy Desires, all good Counsels, and all just Works do proceed.

What have we that we have not received, holds good in all a Creature can possess. Our Piety and Virtue are the Effects of his Grace, and continue at his Pleasure; and to know this that God is All in All, is Perfection of Knowledge; to be ignorant of this Truth, leads directly to that capital Mistake, whereby we deceive ourselves, in thinking ourselves to be something, whereas we are nothing.

Thus are we, in every Point of our Existence, merely dependent Beings; which was the first Thing I asserted.—And I proceed now,

Secondly, to shew, that he on whom we depend has trusted no such Power in our Hands as will be sufficient to help and defend us in any great Distress, whether of Body or Soul.

God's is the Power as well as the Glory, and to him must we seek, if we hope to be Partakers in either.

What Man is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good Days, that knows how to go about to back his Wish, and accomplish his Desires. Will he try what Riches will do, and offer Destruction a Bribe,

Bribe, or buy off his Fate with a Gift? Or will he venture to shew his great Courage, and affright the King of Terrors? Or will he choose rather to exert his whole Strength, and resist the first Approaches of his Ruin? Will he oppose the Soundness of his Constitution, to keep back the Encroachments of old Age? Or will he match Beauty and Comeliness, and Proportion of Parts, in Battle Array against Tarnish, and Wrinkles, and grey Hairs? Were he able by Art or Prowess, or any Thing that is in him, to extend his Years to the utmost Term of his Frailty; tho' a Man may be so strong as to reach fourscore Years, yet is his Strength then but Labour and Sorrow; so that all he would get by prolonging his Life, would be the prolonging of his Wretchedness; and his last Days would as assuredly be worse than the former, as the Lees of Course follow, when the Wine is drawn out.

Nor is our Wisdom of more Ability to help in Time of Need than those other Matters: What Charm has it yet discovered wise enough to prevent Death, or Sickness, or Disability? As far as the World is advanced in the Improvement of Art and Science; yet, with all its boasted Knowledge, it cannot so much as alter the Colour of a single Hair, or add one Inch to our Stature.

Nay, who is there amongst us, with all his Skill, that knows even why he lives; that is able to explain the OEconomy of our vital Functions; to trace the Labyrinths of Nature; and, though but in Hypothesis, to unfold her Ways? And how then should he be able to restore what he does not so much as understand? Or go about to repair and uphold

uphold that Building, to whose very Frame and Materials he is almost an utter Stranger. Of every Kind and Sort of human Virtue, this is equally true : There is no Help in them. His highest Refinement upon Moral Goodness wants still many Grains of Allowance, to make it current in the Kingdom of Heaven ; and he is as utterly unable herewith to make an Agreement with GOD for his own Soul, as he is, with such a Price, to redeem the Soul of his Brother ; so that, without some better Help, he must let both the one and the other alone for ever.

Thus they, who are accounted the Wise and the Good amongst Men, must die, as well as the Ignorant and Foolish ; even they whose Wisdom is the Fear of GOD, they die here ; and that they die not hereafter, is from nothing they can properly call their own, but merely from the Goodness of GOD : This is his free Gift thro' the Redemption that is in his Son JESUS CHRIST. Thus GOD, by Ignorance and Imbecility, checks the Growth of Mortality ; starves and keeps down the towering Pride in Nature, and breaks to Pieces that strong Desire of Independency ; which as it was the Ground of his original Fall, so at this Day, were it not thus nipt, would, like Suckers in a luxuriant Plant, rob and over-top every better Branch, and thereby render the whole Tree of human Life unfruitful.

It is by these Dispensations, which Man calls Evil, and for which he finds in himself no Sort of Remedy, that GOD teaches Man Humility, and brings him back to a due Sense of his State of Dependence upon his Creator. This Consideration naturally leads me, under my

Third

Third General Head, to raise some useful and practical Inferences from the Doctrines thus laid down. And,

*First, when we come seriously to examine into the Nature and Ground of our present Existence, and find how vain, how weak, how precarious our Being is! How easily destroyed, and how hardly preserved! How full of Care and Anxiety, of Hurry and Affright, of Misery and Sorrow! How dissatisfied, whether with, or without, the Gratification of its Appetites! How blind with Ignorance, or conceited with unprofitable Knowledge! How confident in Error, and how senselessly arrogant in the Defence of its own good Actions! One Look at this wretched Scene, will, if any Thing, make us cry out, with the Apostle, *Miserable Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* From the Defects of my Nature; from my own Corruptions; and from the Snares of my spiritual Adversaries? Yet a little while, and my Strength and Understanding, together with my Body, shall be dissolved; and then where is my Help, or where shall I flee for Succour, but unto thee, O LORD! God has, thro' his Son, given us Victory even here: His Grace is eternally sufficient for us; and whoever lays hold of it, God will not leave his Soul in Hell, nor will he suffer him to lie always under this Sentence of Corruption. When we forsake every Thing that will forsake us, then the LORD taketh us up. And this is the first Use we may make of this Doctrine, That it opens in our Souls the Hope of a Redeemer.*

A *second* Benefit that may be drawn from it, is, That it affords us Matter of useful and comfortable Contemplation in our rough Passage through the Waves of this troublesome World.

And how indeed can we find a more useful Employment for the Mind, than in meditating upon our Deliverance from the Frailty and Misery of our fallen Nature. What else can we think of here below, but Vanity and Sorrow? What are ourselves, or what are our Fellow Creatures, that they should divert our Thoughts, or turn them from so blessed an Expectation? All here is but, as it were, gilded Dross, a whited Sepulchre without, Rottenness within. If this appear not at first View, it is not because it is not here, but because it is cover'd from our outward Eyes with the Veil of Vanity. Nothing upon Earth will bear a narrow Scrutiny, nor employ the Mind long, without discovering how unworthy it is to have employ'd it at all: The longer and closer you think, the less will your Delight be; for 'tis next to impossible to put a constant Cheat upon Understanding and Reason. One would think, therefore, that this Consideration should be the most agreeable Retreat from the Hurry and Distraction, from the Vexation and Disquiet, of this vain and wicked World. We shall certainly be deliver'd: All our Deficiencies, whether in Riches, or Honour, or Health, or Wisdom, or Goodness, will be abundantly supply'd by the Son of God, who is himself made unto us, Riches and Honour, and Wisdom, and Sanctification, and Redemption. So that he that is disposed to glory, may still glory in the Lord, and triumph in the God of his Salvation.

A *third*

A *third* Use of this Doctrine, that we have nothing to rely upon but GOD, is, That it will teach us to trust in GOD only, and to say, *whom have we in Heaven but thee; and there is none upon Earth we can desire in Comparifon of thee.* If all our natural Abilities fail us; and our very Wisdom is but Folly of a better Repute: If our Virtues are maimed and imperfect, and our earthly Goods make themselves Wings and fly; or, if they stay, are unable to profit: If the Honour and Fame we receive one of another, be as uncertain as the Breath of them that give it: If Strength and Friends will fail, and be neither able nor willing to help in Time of Need: If all upon Earth be but like a broken Reed, that not only not sustains, but pierces the Hand of him that leans upon it; whither then can we fly; or where shall we find any sure Footing, where our Steps shall not slide, or be entangled, instead of being sustained? Where but in the Hand of him that upholdeth and sustaineth all Things. And he who, by Faith, dares trust here, shall find rest to his Soul, and Refuge when all Things else forsake him. In this Confidence we shall see that our Case can never be desperate; fall when we will we fall into the Arms of Omnipotence: So that neither Poverty nor Contempt, neither Want of Friends nor Reputation, will be any Kind of Bar to our Happiness. Though the Waves of Affliction rage high, and are mighty, yet the LORD of Hosts, in whom we trust, is still mightier than they.

Fourthly, These Considerations open in us that most excellent Gift of Charity, and make us ready to pardon our Brother's Infirmities and Failings, because we are weak and frail ourselves; we expect no Perfection from them, having learn'd from the Naughtiness

tiness of our own Hearts, that nothing like it is to be expected. Frailty is the Parent of Error, and Error the very Guise of Humanity; and we are all continually deceiv'd, because we are but Men. What Room is there then for sharp Reflections, or for opprobrious Terms? What is it we have to quarrel with? 'Tis Humanity. And shall we affront and vilify that in another, which we ourselves continually bear about us? The whole World lies in Sin; and can we be disturb'd because this or that particular Person is not free? Can we be so unjust as to require that Integrity, which we know we cannot perform; being all of us the Sons of *Adam*; Heirs and Imitators of our common Father's Transgression and Prevarication?

I say, these Considerations, if any Thing, will teach us mutual Forbearance, and open in us that Charity, which is to be the Foundation of all our other Hopes; and without which, whosoever liveth is counted dead before God.

But *lastly*, and to conclude, This Doctrine, rightly digested, will create in us a Contempt of this World, and of all that therein is; and, at the same Time, stir up in us earnest Aspirations after a better.

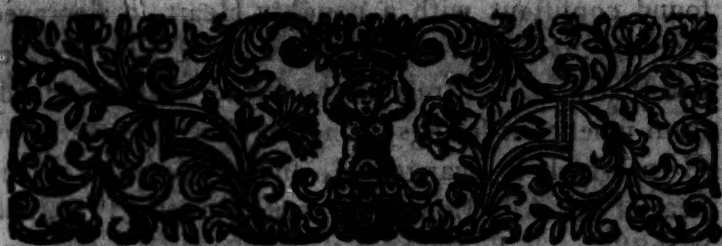
And to be sincere in this Particular is, perhaps, the highest Pitch of Perfection to which Man, on this Side of the Grave, can arrive.

This makes him truly a Pilgrim upon Earth, and proves that his Conversation is really in Heaven. And, indeed, what has this World in it to engage a

godly Man's Esteem, or provoke his Envy towards those who are the deepest endow'd with its Treasures? He knows assuredly that he who has the greatest Share of these kind of Goods, has with them commonly an Augmentation of Care and Sorrow; an Advancement of vain Confidence; and, if I may so say, an Overplus of Vanity beyond the common Portion of his Nature. Let us dare then to turn our Backs upon this World, which stands, as a mighty Screen of Darknes, between GOD and our Souls; and then we shall be able to look up to that Heaven, which is the promised and assured Reward of all those who seek for it in Meekness and Submission, through the Merits of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

To sum up all in the Collect appointed for this Day: Almighty GOD, who seest that we have no Power of ourselves to help ourselves, keep us, we beseech thee, from all Adversities which may happen to the Body, and from all evil Thoughts which may assault and hurt the Soul, thro' JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

SER.



SERMON XVIII.

JEREMIAH xxiv. 7.

I will give them an Heart to know me, that I am the LORD, and they shall be my People, and I will be their GOD.



AN Ability to discern clearly the Difference between the Philosophical and Evangelical Knowledge of God, between what of this Kind may be acquired by Study, and what is purely a Gift from him, is perhaps the most interesting and material Distinction that is referred to the Judgment of Mankind; and readily to distinguish them, the highest Act of the rational Soul, when under the Influence and Direction of the Spirit of Grace. And yet there are not two Things in Nature that come under the same Denomination, that are so widely distant in their Effects and Operations, though few are capable of seeing it: For all the Knowledge we can have of the Deity from the Light of human Reason, as deduced from Arguments, whether drawn from the visible Works or written Word, has ever been

found consistent with a naughty Heart, a depraved Appetite, with a worldly and wicked Course of Life, and that because it reaches no farther than the Head, from whence it springs; whereas that Knowledge of God which is Evangelical, and is addressed to the Seat of our Affections, that captivates the Will, and is the Issue of Faith working by Love, is utterly inconsistent with Iniquity; it ever clears the Way as it goes, and, according to its Measure, purgeth the Heart from Sin and Guilt, and cleanseth, as the Scriptures phrase it, from all Unrighteousness. And this doubtless is the true Reason why all the Messages from God to Man, both in the Old and New Testament, are ever superscribed and directed to the Heart. *Oh that this People, saith Moses, had an Heart to know me!* And the Prophet in the Text answers his Wish, and promises that God will give them an Heart to know him.

Let not any that are jealous for the Honour and Dignity of the human Understanding, think it neglected by this Doctrine. It is ever called upon to take Cognizance of all that passes in the Will, and whatever is felt there must be reasoned upon in its proper Time and Place; but first we must feel, or be sensible, and then we shall reason according to the fit Order and regular Disposition of our Nature. To make this Distinction strong, and to mark firmly the Bounds that are set to divide between the Knowledge of Faith and the Knowledge of Science; the Wisdom of the Will and the Wisdom of the Understanding; the Learning of the Head and the Sanctity of the Heart, is the Design of the ensuing Discourse upon the Text now before us; and which I shall treat in the following Order.—Describing,

I. This

I. This Sort of Knowledge which God gives into the Heart; *I will give them an Heart to know me, that I am the LORD.*

II. Distinguishing it from all other by its Effects, as it ever works a Change in the Man, and brings forth Fruit unto Holiness. *Such shall be my People, and I will be their GOD.* And then,

III. Concluding with a short and close Application to all those who, for their present Ease, chuse not to trouble themselves with such nice Distinctions.

First, then, I am to describe, by its Peculiarities, that Sort of Knowledge of himself which God gives into the Heart. I will give them an Heart to know me, that I am the LORD.

Now, that the Knowledge of God is most excellent, is confessed on all Hands, by People of any tolerable Degree of Sobriety and Understanding. As, in the old Creation, the first Commandment was, *Let there be Light*; so, in the first Formation of the new Creature, a like Commandment must go forth from the Fountain of all Wisdom—*Let there be Knowledge!* Light and Knowledge are indeed the first Foundation Principles, the Elements that constitute either the one or the other. There can be no Creation without Light; no rational Soul without some Religious Knowledge. The Light does not give a more glorious Pre-eminence over the Darkness of Night, than the Knowledge of God gives into the Soul that has been formerly ignorant of him. A Man indeed has no right Understanding in any Thing,

till a Religious Sense make it a Part of it. The Knowledge of the Lord is above all Things for Illumination, and makes them that have it of quick Understanding in every Thing that is worth the Knowledge of an immortal Being. As is the Firmament without the Sun, or the Body without an Eye, so is the Soul when destitute of a spiritual Understanding. But then this Knowledge is not a dead and cold Idea, obtained from Words and Definitions of the Nature and Being of a Deity; of his essential Perfections and most glorious Attributes; such as his Infinity, Eternity, or Omnipotence; no, nor an Ability to divide and split the Substance of the Godhead into divers Personalities and Relations, and then, with Acuteness, reduce them to Unity again: But the true Knowledge of the Holy One is to conceive rightly of him, as manifested in CHRIST; as in Covenant with Man, and as united to his Humanity; as the *Emmanuel*, or God with us; whereby the whole Mind and Will of God concerning us is revealed, both with respect to our Duty and Happiness. God thus known in the Heart, and in our Interest, opens at once the whole Bible to our ready Understanding and Use; explains and reconciles all the hard Sayings and Difficulties, all the seeming Contrarieties both of Law and Gospel; and manifests all the Duties, Comforts, and Privileges, contained both in one and the other.

CHRIST in his Sufferings is likewise hereby opened: How he makes Satisfaction thereby for the Sin of the whole World, and why his Spirit leads us patiently to follow his Example to take up the Cross, and be made herein like unto him, because all the Riches of his Glory and the whole Mystery of Godliness depend thereon.

And

And by this same Knowledge of God the Heart itself is opened; a Man is let into the dark and hidden Secret of himself; all the profound Depths of Iniquity; all the Deceit and Treachery; all the wilely and base Designs, Contrivances, and Wishes that are lodged there as its Treasure, and which spawn forth that long List of horrid Words and Deeds our Saviour deduces from within, as from its original Source, are manifested and laid open to our Inspection.

That Heaven too, wherein nothing dwelleth but Righteousness, and wherein no unclean Thing can enter, is opened to us by the same Means. We are led hereby to understand what that Crown of Glory is, which is there laid up for those that are redeemed from the Earth, and are made fit to wear it, by coming forth out of great Tribulation: The right Sceptre too of that Kingdom comes to our Hand under the right Comprehension of loving Righteousness and hating Iniquity: Its everlasting Rest, its Life and Immortality, are hereby all brought to Light.

The bottomless Pit likewise is opened before our Eyes; in a Degree of Clearness in which others comprehend it not: The Temptations, the Wrath, the Curse, the unquenchable Fire, and the never-dying Worm, all become intelligible, and that without Offence. All that is of God, whether Good or Evil; whether to be for the present classed under the Heads of Anger or Love, in this imperfect and divided State of Things; whatever has been reveal'd concerning either, whether in his Word or Works, are all the proper Objects, and stand sweetly reconciled in this true Knowledge of God. For thus to know, is to apprehend or understand every Thing as worthy of an all-wise,

wise, gracious, and merciful Creator, who has made nothing in order to hate it; or that, through the unavoidable Wretchedness of its Condition, may have just Reason to hate him.

Let him then that would glory in his Knowledge, glory in this, That he thus understandeth and knoweth the LORD: That he comprehendeth, with all Saints, what is the Length, and Breadth, and Depth, and Heighth, of that Love of GOD which is in CHRIST JESUS, who reconciles all Things in Heaven and Earth, through his Mediation. All that the Vanity of Time has brought forth is; when renewed by him, swallowed up in the Riches of Eternity, from which it has for a Season straggled forth, and to which it is by him brought home again; and having so fulfilled his mediatorial Office, he, in the End, delivers up the Kingdom, bettered, and made more perfect by his Ministry, to GOD the Father.

Thus you see that this Apprehension of GOD, that enters by the Heart, and captivates it with Love, puts us upon justifying him in his Sayings; makes us jealous of his Honour, and zealous to find out such worthy Answers as may silence the Objections of Ignorance, and make him overcome when he is judged; and has very little Relation to any taught Opinions or received Notions that natural or metaphysical Science may help us to. The Knowledge GOD gives of himself, carries the Mind up to a Sensibility of Excellency, and an hearty Approbation of all his Ways and Works. As the Apostle speaks—*Our Love abounds more and more, as our Knowledge and Judgment increases*; so that we approve those Things as most excellent, and that because we know GOD, according to CHRIST,

as a Father reconciled to his Children, and who receives them with the greater Affection, when returning after a long Absence: We know him not only as GOD, but as GOD to us; not only as Good, but as Good to us; not only as Wise, but as Wise for us: We know him, with *Thomas*, for my LORD and my GOD. To know GOD in CHRIST, reconciled and propitious, this is Saving Knowledge; but to know, and not possess; to see, and not enjoy; to know how to define Goodness, Mercy, Loving-kindness, Compassion, All-sufficiency, and have the Heart recur, and say,—But what is this to me? This is but a Sort of Mock Knowledge: And to know an angry wrathful GOD is still worse; for this is to know him lost; this is to know and die. *But those that rightly know thy Name, saith the Psalmist, shall put their Trust in thee. They will love, fear, rejoice, and bless thy Name.* To know, and at the same Time to hate, or condemn, or fly, or neglect, or blaspheme GOD, is no Knowledge of GOD in CHRIST, but the deepest Punishment of fallen and apostate Spirits; who are thus wretched, because banished from the sweet Presence of a merciful Creator.

Now, as I purposed to shew,

In the *second* Place, this Divine Gift of Knowledge in the Heart is ever accompanied, and is best known, by these blessed Effects; and by which we are put out of the Power of a Mistake concerning it, for it ever works a Change in the Man, and brings forth Fruit unto Holiness: Or, as the Text expresses it, *They shall be my People, and I will be their GOD*, when their Hearts are thus instructed. It stands indeed fully distinguished from every other Sort of Knowledge,

ledge, by this transforming Power. *We all, saith the Apostle with open Face, beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of the LORD, are changed into the same Image;* Christians cannot be conform'd to this present World, but are transform'd by this renewing of their Mind. Indeed this new Light is the new Creature; old Things pass away, and all Things become new, according to the Degree in which the Mind becomes savingly illuminated. GOD known in the Soul, is no other than GOD united to the Soul; and CHRIST revealed in the Heart, is not one Jot otherwise than CHRIST formed in the Heart; and to speak otherwise of either, is opening a Door at which much Hypocrisy may enter. There is Life in this Light, and it is itself no other than the Light of Life: It inspirits and animates every Grace, and every Act of the Man who has it in Possession; it is as the Main-spring to the whole Movement. As the same Soul sees in the Eye, hears in the Ear, and tastes in the Palate; and as the same Juice is in the Olive-Tree Fatness; in the Fig-Tree, Sweetness; in the Oak, Strength; in the Rose, Fragrancy; in the Lilly, Beauty; so the same gracious Knowledge is Wisdom in the Understanding; is Love in the Heart; is Joy in the Affections; is Heavenly Desire in the Will; Graciousness in the Words, and Goodness in all our Works. As Feeling is inseparable from all the Organs of Sense; and the Eye feels when it sees; the Ear feels when it hears; the Palate feels when it tastes; and the Nostrils feel when they smell; so in this Knowledge of GOD, every Grace, in all its Variety of Workings, is involved: It tinctures and sanctifies to our Use every Thing that passes or comes near the Seat of its Abode. Faith knows, and so believes; Charity knows, and so loves; Temperance knows, and there-
fore

fore abstains; Patience knows, and therefore willingly suffers; and so on of the rest; without Knowledge no personal Act can be performed. Humility must first know, and then she readily stoops; Repentance must know before it can mourn; and Compassion, before it can judiciously pity: Hope without Knowledge can have no certain Expectance, nor Confidence any Ground of Rejoicing. It is purely therefore the Issue of this Knowledge of GOD which he impresses on the Heart, as a living and active Principle, that we in Truth either believe or love; obey, hope, or rejoice.

GOD gives this Knowledge as an Eye to the Soul; and, if it be single, both Body and Soul shall be full of Light; for he that fills Heaven and Earth, by this Act manifesteth that he doth so. The hidden GOD gives himself forth to View in this Knowledge, and adds Sensibility to the Heart, that he pervades the whole Universe, and is the Life of every Creature in it.

And this, I presume, is that Truth, the Knowledge of which, our Saviour says, shall make us free: Or, as the Apostle expresses the same Thing, *We know the Love of CHRIST, and are thereby filled with all the Fullness of GOD*: For as no Day can be form'd otherwise than by the immediate Presence of the Sun, no second-hand Light, borrowed by Reflection from Moon or Stars, will do it; so nothing short of the real Presence of the Deity, or the rising up of the Substance of Goodness in the Heart, can give us the Light of Life. It must be something of the Essence of Eternity; and therefore it is, that GOD is said to dwell in this Light; and Darkness, which is Sin, can no more
mingle

minge with it, than Life can make an Association, or Covenant, with Death. According therefore to the Degree of Manifestation of GOD in us, so far forth is Sin necessarily destroyed out of our Nature, in the same Manner as Goodness must put out Badness, and Badness extinguish Goodness. The Light that is in Man is but as Darkness; the Life that is in him, but as Death; nor is there any more than the Carcass of a Christian, till he be renewed after the Image of him that created him.

If the Love, Humility, Meekness, and Patience of CHRIST be not form'd in us, there is nothing of CHRIST form'd in us; for these Tempers are himself; they are what constitute his Nature, and make him what he is. Whatever we may think we know of CHRIST, yet if we have not his Charity we know nothing of him yet as we ought to know; it is all but a sounding Brass, it is all but a tinkling Cymbal. But if, upon turning the Eye inward, we can find these Graces there, quick and stirring, we have then seen all that may be seen of GOD, nor can he be otherwise manifested; for otherwise no Man hath seen GOD at any Time. But thus he that commands the Light to shine out of Darkness hath shined in our Heart, by giving us the Knowledge of his Glory in the Face of JESUS CHRIST.

And, according to this inward Work of Grace, Fruit will be brought forth in our Life and Actions. We are filled with the Knowledge of GOD's Will, that we might be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness. There must be a Bringing-forth. *A good Man, out of the good Treasure of the Heart, bringeth forth good Things, just as an evil Man, out of his evil Treasure,*

sure, bringeth forth evil Things. Each has his Treasure, and his Bringings-forth are of the Essence of his Stock : Divine Knowledge fills the Heart of the one, and worldly Wisdom the Heart of the other, and they are the respective Ground of each of their Deeds. Sinners shew forth their Inwards by their Outwards ; their Hearts are full, and thereupon their Mouths are full ; their Eyes are full, and their Hands are full. All that is genuine is of the Abundance of the Heart, or else nothing could be known by its Fruit.

Hence it follows that a Treasure of Light and Grace in the Heart will manifest itself in suitable Words and Works. A Fountain without a Stream may be as well supposed, as good Will and no good Deed. *Hereby therefore, saith St. John, we do know that we know him if we keep his Commandments.* The Tree of Knowledge is known, as all other Trees are known, by its Fruit : When we see the Fruits of good Works, Holiness, Righteousness, and Mercy ; Obedience, Faith, Love, Humility, and Patience, hanging upon the Boughs, you may safely pronounce that is the Tree of Knowledge, and the Tree of Life too, both united in one ; for she is a Tree of Life to all that lay hold upon her. Such then is the Knowledge that God gives of himself in the Heart ; it sanctifies the whole Man, Body, Soul, and Spirit : And such is the Proof of its being there, that it brings forth Fruit unto Holiness, and works regularly towards its End, which is everlasting Life.

I shall now, as I purposed,

In

In the *third* and *last* Place, just add a Word or two of Exhortation, and have done.

Make not light then of this Matter, for the eternal Welfare of your immortal Souls is in it. In the Knowledge of GOD standeth our eternal Life, and a Mistake in not rightly distinguishing the saving Knowledge from the scientific, is altogether as dangerous as Ignorance itself. If we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, let us give forth our Testimony accordingly for the Honour of GOD, the Good of Mankind, and the Assurance of our own Hearts. Let us live under the Power of the Truths we know; resign up ourselves to be changed by it into its own Likeness; let our new Light make us new Creatures; teaching in us with Authority, and ruling in us till it has put all Enemies under our Feet; till every Thought and Imagination of our Heart be brought into Captivity and Obedience to the Love of CHRIST. Let us never boast of what we have, or make any Account of our spiritual Acquisitions, till we have well considered what we do. The best Way ever to try our Head, is by our Heart, and the surest Way to prove our Heart is by our Hand: Our Light is best judged by our Love; and our Love by our Life.

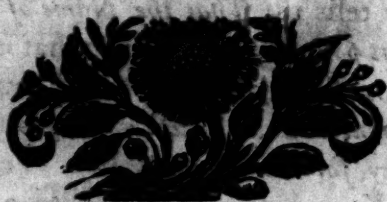
What a desperate Consideration is it, that Sinners are so full of Witness, and Saints so destitute of it? They ever speak and do what they have seen with their Father; but the Grace of the other's Lips are not so evident, nor their Hands so visibly held up in Testimony of their Father's Word and Works. Indeed we should speak what we have heard, and testify
what

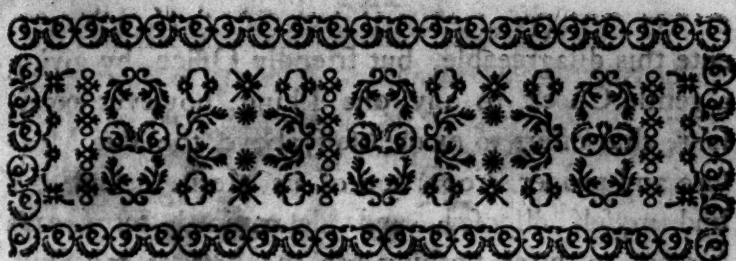
what we have seen. As we have freely received, so should we freely give, as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of GOD; hereby counter-acting the contagious Example of the Wicked, by awakening, with News from Heaven, the Powers lodged in the Soul, on purpose to fit the Heart for Conversion. *My Talk, saith David, hath been of thy Truth and thy Salvation, and I have not kept back the Notice of thy Mercy from the great Congregation.* And not only with their Tongues should Christians speak, but with their Lives and Actions; with their Works and Ways they should shew forth the Wonders GOD hath wrought in their Souls. This is making full Proof that their Wisdom is from above. *If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.* Knowledge, without suitable Works, is worse than downright Ignorance, though that is spoken to our Shame. *Herein is my Father glorified, saith CHRIST, that ye bring forth much Fruit:* And he repeats it to Peter till he is grieved, *If thou lovest me more than others, then feed my Sheep; feed my Lambs. When thou art converted, strengthen thy Brethren.* This is making Knowledge give out its Savour, as St. Paul speaks: And Solomon tells us, *That the Name of the LORD is as Ointment poured forth:* And what is this Sweetness, but GOD shewn to be merciful, gracious, abundant in Goodness and Truth; forgiving Sins and keeping Mercy for Thousands. In a Word; all that carry their Knowledge of GOD into a Practice of Piety, are a sweet Savour of CHRIST, and do, as it were, hand down the Sweetness of GOD unto Men. And this I take to be the highest Privilege, the sublimest Office, the most exalted Honour given to the human Nature, that GOD has made them thus his
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Substitutes in the Work of Righteousness, and enabled them to forward the Salvation of each other.

Send out, therefore, O gracious GOD, the Light of thy Truth into our Hearts, that we may make it shine abroad ; O knit our Hearts unto thee by the Mediation of thy dear Son, and we will glorify thy Name through the same JESUS CHRIST, our LORD ; to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

SER-





S E R M O N XIX.

JAMES i. 22.

But be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

 A M truly sensible of the great Difficulty there is of handling the Matter now before us, in such a discreet and Christian-like Manner, as not to be entangled in my Talk. Speaking against Excesses in the Practice of any great and acknowledged Duty, has ever been found an hard and delicate Province, inasmuch as it subjects to the Censure and Jealousy of the best Sort of People we have amongst us; and who have a Right to be treated, from this Place however, with Marks of Love and all imaginable Tenderneſs. But still as the Miſapprehenſion or Miſapplication of the Rule of Right, has often betrayed into fatal Errors; even as Exceſs in the Uſe of whoſome Food, has deſtroyed more Lives than the moſt rank and deadly Poiſon: It will therefore be found neceſſary, from Time to Time, as ſhall be moſt expedient, to exe-

VOL. I.

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cute this disagreeable, but friendly Office, by giving a gentle Check to any one Thing, however excellent, that offers to exalt itself above the due Measure and proper Proportion of its Merit. And as I find myself disposed, and determined by God's Grace, to utter nothing, to the best of my Skill, but what is according to Truth, and that in the Spirit of Meekness and Good-will, I have good Hope I shall be extricated from this Difficulty, and enabled so nicely to separate the Vile from the Precious, as not to cast a Snare, or give Offence to any ; but, in Demonstration of the Gospel, recommend my Doctrine and Speech to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God. In which Confidence I cheerfully enter upon the Work, wishing Benefit and a Blessing upon all that hear it.

Observe then that the Counsel is directed to Christian Friends, *to Brethren who had received the ingrafted Word* ; and respects nothing but a Mistake in the Use and Design of hearing it preached ; and never can demand a pertinent Application, but when Hearing gets the Start of Doing ; and Doctrine not only takes the Lead, but out-runs Practice, and leaves too far, rather lagging behind, the righteous and sober Life. When Speculation stands in the Way of Action, and diverts the Attention from Matters of equal Concern ; when hearing of Words starves or discountenances any other Gospel Duties, or in anywise keeps back or obstructs the Progress of the all-perfect Work of universal Charity and mutual Benevolence, then there is a manifest Excess : For, in their proper Use and due Proportion, every Divine Word or Work must help and set forward each other.

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Whensoever therefore the great Duty of Prayer, or any other essential Branch of the Christian Life, seems to grow neglected, at the same Time that an Itch for Hearing the Word preached spreads and prevails, so as that scarce any Thing besides has any earnest Heed given to it; then we must conclude there is a Fault springing up somewhere; that some Excess in the Use and Application of what may be, perhaps, right and good in itself, begins to disturb the Harmony of Godliness; and which, if not set in Order in Time, may possibly endanger the Life of the Whole, and bring all into Confusion. This is the Issue of an evil Disease under the Sun, and of which every Age of the World has had its Fit. When the Tempter cannot withdraw the Mind of Man wholly from religious Sensibilities, he then would fain compound the Matter, and persuade him to quiet his Appetite for Heaven, with feeding voraciously upon some particular Portion of the Spiritual Banquet; to stick close to that, and let the rest, whether he be nourished and grow thereby in Grace and Goodness, even take its Chance.

Now, allowing ourselves to be thus persuaded, is what is call'd, here in the Text, by no better a Name than that of *deceiving our own selves*. For if Hearing, and Hearing only, be strictly attended to, and any other Part of Godliness, especially that of doing accordingly, be neglected, the Consequence may be as fatal as if we had never heard at all: And to remedy this Mistake, St. James gives us this Item in the Text.—*But be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own selves*: As if he should have said, Ye are swift to hear, and ready to receive the Word with Joy: All this is right and

good, but see that you do it not blindly ; take heed how and what you hear ; especially that what is thus plentifully poured into your outward Ears, may be so grafted inwardly in your Hearts, as to bring forth out of you the Fruit of Good-living.

We read of a Set of People in *Ezekiel's* Time who could say every one to his Brother, *Come, I pray you, and hear what is the Word that cometh from the LORD, and they come and set before thee as my People : But lo, thou art unto them only as a very lovely Song, of one that has a pleasant Voice, and can play well on an Instrument ; for they hear thy Words, but will not do them.*

Such too were found in *St. James's* Days, or he had not given us this Caution : And such may be found in ours, or else the applying of it afresh would be but Impertinence. I mean not those who maintain it as a Principle, for I know of none such ; but who by their Practice too plainly discover, that when they have heard their Duty well explained, think they have finished their principal Work, when, in Truth, it is scarcely, as yet, well begun.

In order thoroughly to expose and prevent this desperate Mistake in so good a Matter, it will be proper to speak separately to these two following Points.

I. To the Advice, *Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only.* And then,

II. To the Inconvenience and Mischief that will surely follow from the Neglect of it, for hereby you may be led to *deceive yourselves.*

First,

First, then, let us attend to the Advice, *Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only*: Be Hearers, but not Hearers only. I repeat it thus cautiously, because in dealing with Scriptures that consist of comparative Negatives, as this now before us does, we cannot tread too warily: And lest we bring the Matter in Hand to a Not-hearing at all, which is far from my Design, as it would be making the last Error prove worse than the first; we are only cautioned to preserve both; and so to do the former, as not to leave the latter undone: For St. *James*, by opening our Hands to do, intends not to shut our Ears to hear; but wills only that they be not divided, but, as good Friends to each other, always march Hand-in-Hand together. He had been just before advising that we be swift to hear, and meekly, or, as our Liturgy expresses it, with pure Affection, to receive the Word.

GOD from Heaven so began his Law,—*Hear, O Israel!* And so he began his Gospel,—*This is my beloved Son, hear him!* And not only for once, but always so to continue; so long, saith the Apostle, as it is called To-day; which is the Name of every Day, as fast as Time produces them; and will so continue till Time puts an End to itself in the Last Day's Production. Our Saviour himself makes *Mary's* sitting at his Feet and hearing his Word, some of the good Part she had chosen, and which was not to be taken away from her: Nay, he elsewhere calls it the very Key of Knowledge that unlocks the Door of Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

St. *Paul* therefore puts this Matter into the Shape of a Question, and leaves it as unanswerable: *How*

can they be saved, saith he, except they call upon GOD; and how shall they call upon him, of whom they have not so much as heard? For if we are to be Doers of the Word, as he likewise tells us we are, we must consequently hear, that we may know what we have to do. We are therefore to begin with, *L O R D, what wouldest thou have me to do?* Hearing the Answer is necessary to teach us that; if we afterwards prove forgetful Hearers, it will then serve to call us to Remembrance; if we grow dull, blunted, or sleepy upon Duty, it will still serve to quicken, sharpen, and awaken us.

The Queen of the South receives Commendation for coming a long Journey to hear the Wisdom of Solomon; but, lo, a greater Wisdom are we thus called to be Partakers of, sitting at our Doors, the very Wisdom of GOD; for such, we are told, CHRIST is made unto us.

Our Saviour, in a Parable, carries this Matter so high, as to ground an Escape from the bottomless Pit upon it. *If your five Brethren, saith he, in the Case of Dives, would not come into this Place of Torment, why they have Moses and the Prophets let them hear them.* Nay, in Scripture its considered not only as the Key to lock up that Place, but to open another, even the Gate of Heaven. And frequently preaching the Word and preaching the Kingdom of Heaven stand for the same, as being the special Means of bringing Men thither. St. James pronounces of it, in the Verse just before the Text, *That it is able to save our Souls*; the very same Words the Angel uses to *Cornelius*, that when *Peter* came, he should speak Words, whereby he and his whole

whole House should be saved. Those do well therefore who give heed unto it ; and I call upon you in God's Name to be attentive Hearers.

St. *Paul* is so desirous to have Men hear, that he makes it Matter of Joy at the Words being preached, whether sincerely or pretendedly : For if CHRIST be but any how named among you, herein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice ; let them come to be Hearers, even though they come but to mock, or feed an ill-conditioned Curiosity. Those who followed the Apostles with no better Intention than to hear what Men full of new Wine in a Morning could say of a righteous, godly, and sober Life, were many of them sent away sober, righteous, and godly Men. So those Officers who came to take CHRIST, as a Preacher of Sedition, were captivated themselves ; went back without their intended Errand, bearing only to those that sent them this Testimony, *Never Man spake like this Man.*

So then here is a full Proof given of the Use and Necessity of Hearing ; and let the keenest Hearers or Speakers, if they are dissatisfied with it, produce one more ample if they are able : Only let it be observ'd, that we are to be Hearers of the Word ; *i. e.* the Word of GOD, and not the Word of Man's Wisdom or his Folly, which are more nearly related, and oftener mistaken for each other than we can conceive, till the Spirit of discerning has given us Senses exercised to distinguish the Chaff from the Wheat in this delicate Point : But so soon as the Fruit is to be brought forth, the Difference will then plainly appear. The one nourishes up something to Life and Action in Godliness ; the other leaves the Soul

Soul in the starved, famished, empty Condition in which it found it.

Be not therefore Hearers only, it is but a Part and not the Whole ; for when Hearing is done, the Work does but begin : *Go thou and do likewise* must give a fruitful Period to the Word spoken. To make all the Body an Ear, as St. Paul observes, would be to produce a Monster in Nature.

The Scripture therefore never makes a full Stop here, but ever joins a fruitful Issue before it comes to a Point. *This People have well scrid, saith GOD ; but it was when they said to Moses, Bring thou GOD's Word to us, and we will hear it and do it, And who doth CHRIST tell us is the wise Builder, but he that heareth my Words and doth them.*

When the Woman in the Gospel cries out in great Passion, *Blessed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps that thou hast sucked*, CHRIST damps her loving Zeal with a Yea rather *blest are they who hear the Word of GOD and keep it. Blessed is he, saith St. John, that readeth, and they that hear the Word of this Prophecy, and keep the Things written therein : No Stop, you see, till all be fulfilled in Doing. It is not being moved, or affected, or almost persuaded ; all of this Kind is rather Passion than Action, and favours more of being done upon than doing.*

But suppose we confer about what we have thus heard afterwards ; why even this, though it may, in one Sense, be Praise-worthy, yet, in another, it may be but adding more like Words, and making Talk grow out of Talk ; it may serve to exercise our Understandings,

derstandings, and it may tend to puff up, as other Points of Knowledge, and so make us to become rather Judges than Doers still.

Whatever indeed diverts the Mind from this true End of all Instruction, leaves the Matter short, and is but so much Lip-Labour lost. We are to hear that we may do; receive the Seed, so as that it may bring forth many-fold; and so grafted is the living Word to be upon the Tree of Life, as that the Fruits of Righteousness may be found hanging plentifully upon the Branches of it.

Mary's better Part in Hearing, than *Martha's* in Entertaining, shall not be taken from her; but *Mary's* other Part in Doing, in Consequence of Hearing, the Anointing of CHRIST, was still better than either: *For this that she hath done, shall be spoken of for an Example throughout the World. If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them;* is still the Scripture Strain; nor is Man ever more blessed than in his Deeds.

But still farther; we are not to be barely Actors in religious Matters, as upon a Stage; where, when the Curtain falls, all the shining Characters vanish, and every Personage falls with it into himself again: But we are rather to be Factors, or as Merchant-Men, seeking Gain by Trade; who, when they come to cast up their Accounts, find themselves in Possession of some real Treasure, *the goodly Pearl of great Price.*

When our Saviour was interrupted in his Discourse by some who told him of his Mother's standing without

without, desiring to speak with him: *Who is my Mother, saith he? Even they who hear and do my Words; such travel of me in Birth till I am fashioned in them; and in this Light the Word is truly made Flesh and dwells amongst us.*

This may suffice for being not only *Hearers*, but also *Doers of the Word*. And I proceed now, as I proposed,

Secondly, to speak of the sad Consequence of our not carefully attending to this Counsel, lest we be found to have *deceived our own selves*.

The Apostle could not have devised a more cutting and Heart-searching Expression: For those who are faulty in this Particular, dread nothing so much as to be thought deceived or unwise in the whole Will of the LORD concerning them; as if they were the only People, and Knowledge should live and die with them. They pity much the Ignorance of former Times; and, as they are in the Light, cannot bear the Thought of having Blindness in any Part supposed to have happened unto them.

Our Saviour, in his Time, had to do with Men of Knowledge, in Divine Matters so completely zealous, that not only their Heads and Hands, but their Garments quite down to the Skirts of their Clothing, were superscribed with something of this Kind; and yet he finds no better Title for them, than that of *Fools and Blind*.

And the Psalmist, before him, says of Men deeply exercised in Sabbath-keeping, and every Act of religious

ligious Formality for forty Years in the WilderNESS,
*That they were a People still who erred in their
 Hearts, and had not known the Ways of GOD.*

So likewise St. *Paul* has an Eye upon some, who
 were ever learning, but never able to come at the
 Knowledge of the Truth.

Now, Somebody must be here deceiv'd ; for these
 Things ought not so to be : And it must be either
 GOD, or the Preacher, or the Hearers. *Be not de-
 ceived*, saith the Apostle, *GOD is not mocked* ; can
 neither deceive nor be deceived : So the Error must
 be sought for amongst ourselves.

We have the Prophet *Isaiah* complaining, *Alas, I
 have laboured in vain, and spent my Strength for
 nought*. But what says the Answer of GOD ? *That
 neither he nor his Word were to blame*. His Reward
 was safe with his GOD, whether the Hearer profited
 or not : For as the Rain that cometh down never
 returns empty, so neither shall the Word be dropt,
 without doing something to the Glory of him who
 appoints it for a Saviour, whether of Life or of
 Death.

So that if neither GOD nor the Preacher of his
 Word be deceived, the Deception must rest wholly
 upon the mistaken Hearer.

And, indeed, many Ways are they subject to it, but
 more especially, and which serves as an Inlett to end-
 less Errors, in mistaking the whole End and Design
 of Hearing at once ; which is merely to rectify the
 Heart, and make the Issues of it sincere. The Word
 is

is to act as Seed sown; and which, if it bring forth nothing, is but as Rottenness in the Bowels of the Earth. Again, it is as a Glass; which if not look'd into with design to rectify what is amiss, but rather to admire ourselves: Or if we go away, and straightway forget what Manner of Men it has represented us, we have mistaken its Office, and had better never have consulted it. But to be deceiv'd, is no such Wonder; the wisest of Men are subject to it: The worst is still behind, they deceive themselves. The Deceived are ever Objects of Pity; but the Deceiver is utterly without Excuse, and never more so than when Self is at the Bottom of the Cheat.

Hear then the Determination of the whole Matter from our Saviour's own Mouth; *I know you not.* This is represented as an unexpected Kind of Speech; and they to whom 'tis spoken are bold to make a confident Reply, *LORD have we not heard thee teaching in our Streets; nay have we not taught in thy Name, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works?* But he continues steady to his first Sentence, *I know you not: Depart from me all ye Workers of Iniquity.* And this Word they must do, as well as hear; tho' they have so miserably deceived themselves in the Course of their mortal Lives, as to dream of Salvation, whilst they separated the hearing the Word of God from the doing of it.

But to conclude. Since then God has so joined them together, let no Man be so silly as to think of putting them asunder. Whoever mistakes the Means for the End, and rests in his Error, will in the End find himself fatally deceived. That total Conversion that is to be wrought in our corrupt Nature by the
redeem-

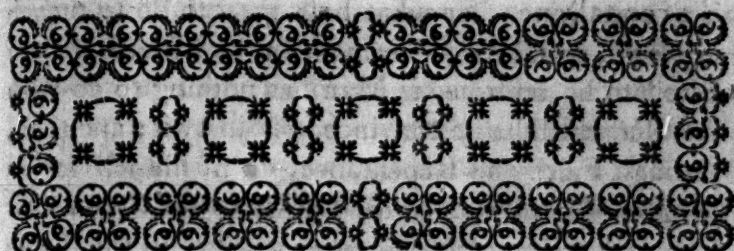
redeeming Power of CHRIST, before we can be fit Inhabitants of that Kingdom whereinto Flesh and Blood, and no unclean Thing can enter, is of higher and deeper Account, than either hearing or speaking can, of themselves, execute or estimate. Words alone are but Wind, which may serve to blow up a Fire, but can create no such Thing: And, if they stir not up some such hidden Power lodged in the Soul, as they can produce no new Creature, what can they do, but puff up the old one? Would we then hear with Profit, let us immediately *go, and do likewise*; for in that, Life, and its true Distinction, stands.

The Practice of Godliness is mostly a Work within, and whilst we can reflect, can never want Matter to exercise itself upon. When ye hear then of being made like unto CHRIST, resign yourselves to the Will of the Father, even as he did: When ye hear of loving of Enemies, pray for them: When ye hear of Meekness and Lowliness, humble your Souls with Prayer and Fasting: When ye hear of saving Faith, examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith: When ye hear of a lively Hope, try if ye be dead to the World: When ye hear of perfect Charity, see that ye have it towards all Men. The Tree thus mended within, the outward Fruits can never be long behind; and when they appear, then may we, with Confidence well grounded, cry out, *Thanks be to GOD who hath given us the Victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST*; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-

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11



S E R M O N XX.

GALATIANS I. II.

The Gospel which was preached of me, is not after Man: For I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST.

THE Gospel, rightly conceived, is neither after Man's Fancy, nor agreeable to his Relish; nor can he teach that which he understands not, or give to another what he has not in himself. And if any one Man more than another had a Right to make this Declaration, it was he who here makes it; who, with all his great Learning and Knowledge, gathered up at the Feet of Gamaliel, or otherwise studied out, yet could arrive no higher in Gospel-Knowledge than what made him a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and injurious, till it pleased God, in a marvellous Manner, to reveal his Son in him: And to every one it must in some Sort be revealed, before it is rightly apprehended; for neither its Value nor its Praise is of Men, but of God. And this Point St. Paul is every where, throughout his Writings, exceeding earnest to establish: Indeed it
is

is a capital one; for what hast thou to do to preach my Law, or take my Covenant in thy Mouth, if thou hatest to be reformed? Man has nothing to do with the Gospel till he be convinced of Sin by it; and then, through Faith and Repentance, to fit himself for its gracious Promises. In his Epistle to the *Corinthians* he makes the same Profession as he here, in the Text, does to the *Galatians* in these Words—*I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received; how that CHRIST died for our Sins; and, to the Ephesians, thus—That by Revelation he made known the Mystery; which in other Ages was not made known to the Sons of Men, as it is now revealed unto his holy Apostles and Prophets, by the Spirit: And so in many other Parts of his Epistles, speaking of this very Thing. St. John the Evangelist bears Testimony to the same Truth; telling us plainly that those who believe on the Son of GOD, and thereby receive Power to become his Children, are not born of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of GOD. And St. John the Baptist, That a Man can receive nothing of the Spiritual Kind, except it be given him from Heaven.*

But a monstrous Opinion now prevails amongst many nominal Christians, that GOD has, as it were, forsaken the Earth at that very Time when he promises to make CHRIST, the Truth, to flourish out of it: That all Divine Communication is at an End, now the Word is made Flesh, and dwells amongst us: That the Holy Spirit, tired, I suppose, with his Office, has thrown it up at the very Juncture when the Exercise of it, in its full Extent, was all along pointed at: That since Gospel-Light has been fully established, and, by Dint of Argument, proved true, Man-

Mankind are now left to themselves in the Dark; to the Guidance of their old blundering Tutor,—Reason; and which, being interpreted, is no other than their own lustful Will and vain Desire: And that since the History of that Revelation, which was kept secret from the Foundation of the World, for our Glory, has been canonically shut up and sealed, the Thing itself, in Substance and Power, is come utterly to an End for evermore. To obviate in some Measure such frightfully absurd, but too common, Sentiments, I purpose, in my following Discourse, to speak,

I. Of the several Ways by which it pleases God, at this very Day, to reveal his Will to the Sons of Men: And then,

II. Shew how they, vainly puff'd up by their fleshly Mind, are continually intruding into Things beyond their Sphere; and would fain be wise above what is written, and no otherwise knowable than by the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST, by the Word and Spirit of God.

First, then, let us look into the several Ways by which it pleases God, at this very Day, to reveal his Will to the Sons of Men: The most universal of which is Conscience, which he first tenders with an exquisite Sense of Good and Evil, Hope and Fear, Honour and Disgrace; and then, in this State, impresses upon it a Value for every Sort of Goodness, whether term'd Human or Divine. And such a sensible Manner of Revelation, St. Paul says, was common to the Heathen with the rest of Mankind; there having ever been a—Τὸ γινώσκον τὸ θεῖον—something of

GOD that might be known, and which in this Manner he has always manifested : So that where GOD had not given a written Law, they might by this Means become a Law unto themselves, having the Truth and Obligation of it written upon their Heart, their Conscience bearing Witness.

And this Writing upon the Heart, as it is the sure Foundation of all our Religious Notions ; and, as a first Principle, admits no Dispute, but immediately claims the Assent ; so is the Book itself almost always open, and the Characters so fair and legible, that he who runs may read them. Nay, which is more, they are so deeply engraved that, endeavour what we can, we are not able, at Pleasure, either to alter or erase them.

Whether we are charm'd with Pleasure, or hardened by evil Custom ; whether we are close wrapt up in Retirement, or hurried out of ourselves with Noise and Business, Conscience will sometimes stick so close to the Mind, as not to be shook off, or drowned, by any of these Circumstances. Nay, an Endeavour to discard it by any Means has been ever found to enflame its Vigilance and increase its Power, to make it whet its Sword and sharpen its Arrows. Wink we never so hard this Light will, at one Time or other, flash in our Eyes, and search into the very inmost Corners of the Heart. *GOD is not very far from every one of us*, as St. Paul told the Athenians, even when they were far gone from him through Idolatry and Superstition. And thus we hear our Saviour expostulating with the Jews,—*Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right ?* This Kind of Witness in ourselves GOD never left himself without ; and it is such

such a one as won't be brow-beaten, or suffer its Testimony to be invalidated. When GOD sees fit to touch upon this String, which is the principal Chord in our whole Composition, and thereby convince the Soul of Sin; all Nature, Soul and Body, tremble and fall at the very Sound of it. This is Revelation with a Witness, and as irresistible as *Paul's* Light above the Mid-day Sun. The Mind, thus awakened, is now fitted for another and more gentle Impression, which GOD is pleased to make upon it by his Works and Providence. And this *St. Paul* objects to the very Heathens themselves,—*That the visible Things of GOD are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made:* So that they to whom his written Word never came, may notwithstanding, from his Works, learn enough to leave them without Excuse.

The Heavens do their Office perpetually in declaring the Glory of GOD; and the Firmament never ceaseth to shew his Handy-work: There is no Speech nor Language where their Voice is not heard, if there be but Ears to hear. GOD, saith the Wise Man, hath set the World in Man's Heart; he hath given up the Course of Things to our Contemplation; and who so is prepared in Wisdom, will see as much of a miraculous Power in the rising or setting Sun, as in the Flame in the Bush, or the more devouring Fire on the Top of *Sinai*. As there is in these much out of our Reach, so is there not a little whereby GOD makes himself evidently known, as well indeed by what is hidden, as by what is manifested; for both shew clearly,—That there is over all an infinite Power, great in Counsel, and mighty in Working; whose Glory the Heavens declare, and all his Works set him forth; to be pondered as far as we can un-

derstand them, and to be admired where we do not; and who teacheth like him? Who actually makes himself better understood in the Dark than in the Light; in Times of Trouble and Confusion; when the Arm of the LORD is revealed in Vengeance; when the Wrath of the LORD is revealed from Heaven against our Sins: For though we take no Notice of him in his Word, Creatures, or Ordinances, yet we can sometimes see him in his Terrors; when he teaches us, as *Gideon* taught the Men of *Succoth*, with Briars and Thorns: *When his Judgments are in the Earth*, saith the Prophet, *the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.*

And as GOD doth at this Day reveal himself in us by moving upon the Conscience, and by giving us an Insight into the Wonders of his Works; so doth he likewise farther manifest his Will, by opening in us a spiritual Discernment of his Word. And this revealing Word GOD hath in former Ages dispensed to Mankind in great Variety of Shapes, at sundry Times, and in divers Manners; by Visions, Dreams, and Extasies; by the Sacred Oracle, and the Voice from Heaven; but more fully by his Law to *Moses*, and his Spirit to the Prophets; and, to compleat all, in these last Days, he speaks to us by his Son: *In whom*, saith the Apostle, *the Revelation of the Mystery, which was kept secret since the World began, is now made manifest for the Obedience of Faith.* To his Teaching *Moses* and the Prophets give Place; by him GOD's Will is not only declared, but done; Life and Immortality not only brought to Light, but actually taken Possession of. And as, at the Beginning of the World, that Light which serv'd a-while to distinguish the Day from the Night vanished and gave Place so soon as the Sun was created, so all those first Manifestations

stations made to the Patriarchs and Prophets expired, or rather were compleated, when CHRIST, who is our Life, appeared amongst us. It is not now, I have dreamed, I have seen a Vision; but, Dost thou believe on the Name of the only-begotten Son of GOD? It is not now, the Word of the LORD came to this Man, or to that; but all may know him, from the Least to the Greatest. And the written Word that records these Things may justly be called a standing Revelation, when spiritually opened in us according to the Mind of CHRIST; otherwise indeed it is all but a dead Letter, a sealed Book, and wholly hid from those that are lost. *The natural Man*, saith St. Paul, (and it is as true now as when St. Paul spake it) *perceiveth not the Things of the Spirit of GOD, for they are Foolishness unto him*; and, were it not for the Sake of good Manners, he'd tell you as much plainly. In short, no Man can know GOD, or his Gospel, till CHRIST reveal them; and how that is done he himself tells us—*When the Comforter is come, whom I will send, even the Spirit of Truth, he shall teach you all Things.*

If we have this Unction from above, saith St. John, that Anointing teaches us all Things, even all that may make us happy and wise unto Salvation; nor is there any Instructor that teacheth to profit in the Things of the Spirit, but the Spirit itself. And surely if the written Word were not to be so opened by a discerning Gift, as that Men of honest Minds and ordinary Understandings may profit by it, without the Help of human Learning and worldly Science, the Holy Apostles and Prophets may seem to have written to small Purpose; and the Book of the Scriptures would be the most unable to attain the End it aims

at, which is giving Knowledge to the Simple, and Conversion to the Sinner, of all that ever was written in any Science since the World began. For though in many Passages there may seem little Meaning, and in others such Depths as he who had been caught up to the third Heaven stands amazed at; yet all Things necessary to Salvation shall, Time after Time, and as is most expedient, be made sufficiently clear from the Word, to every honest, humble, and diligent Inquirer, who seeks only that he may believe and obey. To all such there is a Promise made of the Divine Assistance, to discern according to their respective Wants; and no farther can be required of them, no farther can be desired by them: And this Promise is in a great Measure fulfilled, when, in this Temper, we take the Book of God in Hand.

But, observe, all this is nothing after Man; his Curiosity and Thirst after Knowledge leads him quite another Way, not to be reform'd or help'd, but to be made wise; as will appear now we come,

Secondly, To shew how Mankind trespass upon the Gospel; treating it as a Matter subject to their carnal Judgment, and suitable to their natural Apprehensions, whereas it is knowable only by Faith, and in the Way of a Revelation from JESUS CHRIST.

Now, the very first Thing Man's Wisdom usually leads him to, when, without Grace, he takes the Things of God into his Consideration, is to censure the Dispensations of his Providence. These indeed, to outward Appearance, when speculated without Hope and Trust in God, who brings Good out of Evil, and Light out of Darkness, seem oftentimes

very

very irregular, full of Disorder and wild Contingencies; and, in Truth, to the natural Understanding of Man, when under the Impression of Sadness, when it forms its justest Judgment, exhibits a most ghastly Scene. There is one Event to the Righteous, and to the Wicked; nay, and which is worse, there is to be seen the just Man perishing in his Righteousness, and the Sinner prolonging his Life in a prosperous Course of Wickedness. This has ever been a Stone of stumbling, even to wise and good Men in all Ages; who have been hereby tempted to entertain hard Thoughts concerning Divine Justice, as though the Ways of the LORD were not equal. The Prophet *Jeremy* himself, though he be convinced in the Point, yet still has an Itch to be disputing: *Flesh and Blood cannot forbear. Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy Judgments; wherefore doth the Way of the Wicked prosper? And all they are happy who deal very treacherously.* This is after the Manner of Men; nor can this Judgment be rectified, otherwise than by the Revelation of a crucified Saviour.

Another Instance, wherein Man's Judgment and the Gospel-Revelation stand at an irreconcilable Distance, is in the Application of his severe Dispensations. What rash Interpretations do we put on these Things! Though CHRIST say—*I tell you nay*; yet, if the Tower in *Siloam* fall, we straightway pronounce those the greatest Sinners that suffer under it. The *Galileans* that are dash'd to Pieces at their Devotions, and have their own Blood mingled with their Sacrifices, are concluded the wickedest of all *Galileans*; and if a Viper fasten upon *Paul's* Hand, no doubt presently but the Man is a Murderer. What

is

is this but to take upon us, as much as in us lies, to guide the Hand of the Almighty when he strikes? Nay, what is it less than setting ourselves in God's Stead; and not only to judge our Brother, whose Heart we know not, but to judge our Maker also, and measure his Thoughts and Ways by the scanty Model of our own. This is, sure enough, after Man; but how preposterous does it sound in any that are called Christians, whose whole Religion is built on a crucified Saviour, persecuted Prophets, and martyr'd Apostles?

But again: Another Way by which Man usurps upon the Gospel, and would fain be wise beyond what is revealed, is by an impertinent Inquisitiveness into future Contingencies. Some have thought, and that on good Grounds, that God, out of mere Pity to Mankind, did conceal from him the Knowledge of what it was necessary for him to suffer in his Passage through this mortal Life, this unkind and cruel World. Had we an Insight given us, at our first Entrance upon this sad Stage, of all the disagreeable Scenes we are to act in before we can make our final Exit, few would willingly tread it, and scarce any have Patience to stay on it till it was regularly closed. God has therefore kindly hid from us the Knowledge of what is to come, on purpose to take us off from the Care and Anxiety it must needs have multiplied upon us; and that we might be in a Condition fit to go thro' the Drudgery of Life, which he knows to be expedient for our future Exaltation. Yet such has been at all Times the Petulancy and Perverseness of human Nature, that we are ready to neglect the Things that are before us, wherein our Duty and Interest stand; whilst

whilst we pursue, and listen after, what shall come to pass hereafter; which, by the Way, we can never know, nor should be a whit the better if we could. It appears that the *Jews*, GOD's own People, were often tax'd, upon this Account, in the Books of *Moses* and the Prophets: And for this our Saviour also reproaches them; they would still be seeking after a Sign; they were very diligent to discern the Face of the Sky, and of the Earth, to know what was a coming, but took no Notice of CHRIST's Kingdom and Gospel that were actually come. Nay, we find even his Disciples frequently guilty of this Presumption, and often reproved by him for it. *Master, when shall all these Things be, say they; what shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World?* He replies, *Of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man; watch ye therefore.* And so, after he was risen, they ask, *LORD, wilt thou at this Time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* He tells them, *It is not for you to know the Times or the Seasons which the Father hath put in his own Power.* All this is after Man, not a Grain of Gospel in it.

The last Instance I shall produce to shew how these two are at Odds, is in Man's prying presumptuously into GOD's eternal Decrees.

It is the Method of many to begin the Work of their Salvation at the wrong End, as it were; and their first Step towards Heaven must be an infallible Assurance that Heaven is theirs, though CHRIST be not yet form'd in them, and the Image of GOD be very slightly expressed in their Lives. And tho' even the best of Men, without an Injury to Truth, may often

often entertain an humble Suspicion of their eternal Salvation, yet must they needs read their Names among the Stars, and see themselves enrolled in the Volumes of Eternity, or else they'll do nothing. In this vain Confidence they go on without Controul; and, it may be doubted, are so much the less careful to work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling, which is the Gospel-Method, by how much the more they make sure of it already.

But now, if such an absolute Security cannot be attained, then are they as sure, on the other Side, that GOD has decreed them to everlasting Perdition; his Wrath is implacable; his Grace is irrecoverable, and all their Endeavours utterly to no Purpose. And thus, through a querulous and stubborn Despondency, they neglect the Duties that lie before them, and are in a fair Way of fulfilling their own Fears.

I have now finished my Design, having brought the Matter of the Text to this Issue, that what is after Man is not after CHRIST, and that Nature and Revelation never pull together. I shall therefore detain the Subject no longer in Hand, but just whilst I take out of the Infidel Quiver one of their sharpest Arrows, and return it upon them. Gospellers, say they, are against Reason, because Reason is against them: So far we agree, that it is against the Reason of unregenerate Man; but, in the Conclusion, we differ as wide as Heaven and Earth—Therefore, say they, Abandon the Gospel; therefore, say we, Give up corrupt Reason; for it cannot forgive us our Sins, nor save our Souls alive.

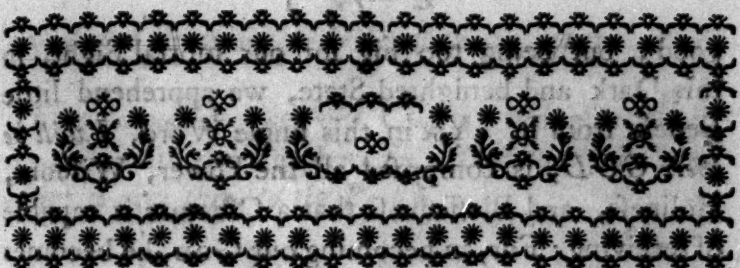
May

May God keep us from all Things hurtful, but especially from leaning too much upon our own Understanding; for we are desperately blind, and, in Proportion, desperately bold. Reveal in us, O gracious Father, the Light of Life, through thy dear Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

SERMON XXI

SER-

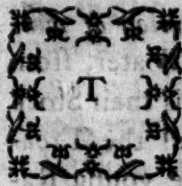




S E R M O N XXI.

I. CORINTHIANS iii. 22.

*Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the World,
or Life, or Death, or Things present, or Things to
come; all are yours; and ye are CHRIST's; and
CHRIST is GOD's.*

 HERE is such a Plenitude of Bounty made over to us in this Declaration and Promise, that if I should go about to declare and speak of it together, it would be found more than I am able to express. I must therefore take it to Pieces, and handle each Particular of which it is compounded separately, so far forth as the Time and my Ability will permit me to bring them into Discourse: Observing no other Order, than what arises from reversing that in which they are here placed, that we may begin with speaking,

First, of GOD; who is himself deliver'd out as a Part of that All here promised to be made our own. This indeed comprehends, and is every Thing that's good

good; but being too big for our mortal Sight, in this Dark and benighted State, we apprehend little Benefit from it. Yet in this single Word, *I will be their GOD*, is comprised all the Power, Wisdom, Holiness, and Blessedness that a Creature is capable of receiving: For, in becoming our GOD, he becomes our Friend. *I was angry, but mine Anger is now turned away.* Death and Destruction, together with the whole Band of Evils that make up their Equipage, fly away, and vanish as Shadows at the Break of Day, when GOD is felt to be our Friend. But tho' Fear may fly for a-while before the Sense of such a Friendship, yet where shall we find Subsistence? Stifle this Dread; GOD will suffer none of his Friends to want: He that can make, can surely maintain; and he that saves our Lives, knows how to find us a Livelihood. Under this Character of our GOD, he is styled our Portion as well as Friend. He writes himself the Portion of *Jacob*; and, as such, all his Saints and Servants accept him: *The Lord is the Portion of mine Inheritance*; he is their Bread and their Water, from whom all Bread and Water comes; he is their Stock and their Store, from whose Riches all the Treasures of Nature flow: He that feeds the young Ravens, and the old Lions, and the worst of Men, can withhold nothing of this Kind that is good from them that live a godly Life. *In my Father's House there is Bread enough and to spare*; and whosoever hath this Plenty in any other House, has nothing but what Moth, and Worm, and Rust, may take and eat before him. Though the Righteous beg their Bread, yet, with him for their Portion, by whose Word Man liveth, as well as by Bread, it shall do its Office, and, at one single Act, sweetly nourish both Soul and Body. This then is the first and great Por-

tion of the Promise, *G O D shall be yours.* And

The *second*, is like, *viz.* CHRIST himself: *I will give thee, saith the Prophet, for a Covenant; or I covenant to give thee, to the People.*

Now, whatever Glory or Blessedness there may be in the Fruition of GOD, yet how shall we get at it? How shall we get over the Gulph fix'd between us and him? How shall we scale the Partition-Wall that stands in our Way? How shall we cancel the Hand-writing that is against us? While these Obstructions remain, all that's blessed and desirable in GOD is nothing to us. To cure us of this well-grounded Dread, GOD hath given his Son to be ours: The First-born of every Creature, in whom too dwells the Fullness of the Godhead bodily: He becomes a Man to give us both Hope and Help: He comes for a Light to the *Gentiles*, and whosoever will follow him, shall have the Light of Life: He shall see and know the Father, in seeing and knowing him in whose Face the Glory of GOD is made to shine: He is, himself, the LORD our Righteousness; our Price our Ransom; who blots out the Hand-writing, breaks down the Partition-Wall, and fills up the Gulph with Transgressions finished and Sin made an End of. Whatever Difficulties or Doubts appear in the Way, or arise in our Hearts, from Sin or Guilt; from Wretchedness or Worthlessness; Satisfaction, in all Points, is made by the Sacrifice of CHRIST, and everlasting Righteousness brought out of it, to fill up the Vacancy this Destruction makes: He atones on Earth, and intercedes in Heaven. As *Aaron*, the Type of CHRIST, was to bear the Names of the Children of *Israel* engraved on his Breast-Plate,

Plate, when he went into the Holy Place; so our Redeemer, the faithful and merciful High-Priest, has his Ransom'd-ones, which indeed are his Body, and ever with him in the Presence of GOD: And his Plea is, *Father forgive them, for they are mine; and all mine are thine.*

He is likewise given us for our King and Governour; and such a King he is as both saves and defends his Subjects. *His Name shall be call'd JESUS, because he shall save his People.* 'Tis a great Mercy to be under such a Governour as saves and defends; and what would become of us were there no such King in *Israel*? Whither would our unruly Hearts carry us; and what Tyranny, what Cruelty would not be exercised both by us, and upon us? *Rejoice then greatly, O Daughter of Zion; shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having Salvation; lowly, and riding upon an Ass.* As a King, he bestows his Salvation; as lowly, he shews the true Power of his Kingdom. He comes not to get, but to give; not to give Laws, but good Gifts unto Men: And, to the Lowly, he gives like a King, Palms, and Crowns, and Thrones; Salvation to his People, by the Remission of their Sins.

How ungrateful, how foolishly rebellious are the Children of this World, who will not have this Man to reign over them; and yet who, without him, have no Inheritance, but Ruin; no Liberty, but to be miserable. Let such inherit their own Folly; *but let Israel rejoice in him that made them; and let the Children of Zion be joyful in their King.*

Come

Come all ye Sons of *Anak*, ye Seed of the Giants; come all ye Sons of *Belial*, ye Seed of Adultery; come all ye *Ishmaelites*, *Ammonites*, *Moabites*, and *Hagarenes*; associate, confederate, take Counsel together; smite with the Tongue, push with Horn, Side, and Shoulder; let all the Powers of Darknes, all the Gates of Destruction, join with the King of Terrors, Death, at the Head of them; the Virgin, the Daughter of *Zion*, with this her King in the Midst of her, shall be no otherwise moved at your united Terrors, than in Scorn to shake her Head at you.

CHRIST is her Head as well as King: He is given to be the Head over all Things to the Church; from which all the Body of the Faithful, by Joints and Bands, having Nourishment ministred and knit together, increaseth with the Increase of GOD; and of his Fulness have all we received.

Though therefore we are nothing in ourselves but Darkness; weak in Knowledge, weak in Faith, in Love, in Patience, yet are we Light in the LORD; in him are hid all the Treasures of Grace, Wisdom, Knowledge, Meekness, and Patience, and in him we share of them all. *All are yours, if ye are CHRIST's, and CHRIST is GOD's.* But farther,

Thirdly, The World is here said to be ours likewise. This may appear but oddly joined with GOD and CHRIST in the same Gift; but yet, though the Righteous neither expect nor desire to have their Reward in this Life, this Life, as well as that which is to come, are, notwithstanding, both put here into the Promise. *The Meek shall inherit the Earth;* and

Things present, as well as Things to come, are here said all to be yours : The present Goods of this Life, Houses, and Brethren, and Sisters, and Mothers, and Lands ; nay, Riches and Honours. But let us not be in too great Haste to lay hold of these Promises in our own carnal Sense : Remember they are made by CHRIST to his Christians, and that they must be qualified so as to be made consistent with all the rest that is at the same Time declar'd concerning these Things ; with, *Go sell that thou hast, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven, and come follow me.* All is to be possessed, Houses and Lands, and whatever else is put together, so as to be consistent with Persecutions, for they are joined in the same Sentence ; and, after all, our Comforts must spring from that good Cheer which arises from CHRIST's having overcome the World, for in it Tribulation is still included.

But yet, with or without these Clogs, where are they found ? Or how is this Part of the Promise in any Sense made good ? Who are the Poor, the Harbourless, the Friendless ; who have Wo, Want, Shame, and Sorrow ; who are Strangers and Pilgrims, hunted up and down, and driven to Corners ? To whom has Hunger and Thirst, Cold and Nakedness, been more familiar than to the Godly in all Ages ; insomuch that St. *Paul* makes them the Signs of an Apostle.

But, notwithstanding all this, all the Promises of GOD are sure, and this is one among the rest—The Meek are to possess the Earth ; and this Life, or the World, is here positively said to be yours ; and, without any Straining, all this may easily be reconciled. A Christian who has renounced the World, at that
very

very Instant begins to have the right Use and proper Enjoyment of it; as, having nothing, he possesses all Things. In this State he has as much of it as he desires, and that is more than any other Sort of Possessor has to say. Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these Things, and how much they need he knows, and so much is given them; so much as that, in the Days of Dearth, they shall have enough.

Many have too much; too much Money; too much Esteem; too many Friends; more than does them Good, but rather serves to sink and drown them in Perdition and Destruction. Christians have enough in being possessed of that LORD, whose is the Earth, and the Fulness thereof: They know a Secret that others do not; they know that what little they have descends to them by Promise as well as Providence; and, under this double Title, it becomes sure and satisfactory: They can have more for asking, but find no need to ask for more, as being Fellow-Heirs with him who is the Heir of all Things. And a scanty Morfel, thus eat in Faith, in that very Thought becomes a Feast of fat Things: It has a Power of changing Bran into the finest Flour, and turning Water into the best of Wine.

However, they are delivered from the Anxiety of *What shall we eat, what shall we drink, or wherewithall shall we be cloathed?* Which pierces the very Soul of the *Gentile* with Sorrow; eats up his Comfort, and brings a cold Damp upon the Heart, that chills, in spite of the best and warmest Cloathing. Anxiety, at any Time, cuts deeper than Want; and, after all, what Good is got by thus taking Thought?

It will add about as much to your Store, as it will Cubits to your Stature.

Let then the Promise be my Portion; and let but my Mefs be from thy Table, O blessed LORD! And be it much or little, *Benjamin's Five-times-as-much*, or *Judah's Single Slice*, I am content to be at thy Allowance. Let but my Portion in this Life rest upon thy Deed of Gift, and put my Children's Names into the same, and I will ask no more for Self or Company; in nothing of this Sort careful, if the LORD be but at hand.

Fourthly, And as the present Goods, so, in the next Place, the present Evils are, as a Part, and a great Part too, of this World, put into the Promise; even that of the Cross, which includes and respects them all: And which, in the New Testament, is not imposed as a Burden only, but is bequeathed as a Legacy. *Unto you it is given not only to believe, but also to suffer.* 'Tis joined too, we see, with the most glorious of Gifts, even that of Faith: And the Cross, by CHRIST's having been upon it, is changed from a Curse to a Blessing.

And now it is, Blessed are ye Poor; blessed are the Persecuted; and blessed are the Outcast and Reviled: The Woes are all gone over to the other Side of the Question; Wo unto you that are rich; Wo unto you that laugh and are full; Wo unto you whom all the World speak well of; and that with a Reason which not one in a hundred obtains—For ye have received your Consolation; so that the Cross and the Curse are now separated. To the Wicked every Affliction is a Curse; there is Wrath in all their Sufferings,

ings, Venom in every Arrow, Vengeance in every Dart. But the very Curses Men pour forth on the Righteous are nothing but Crosses; tho' there may be Vinegar or Gall in the Cup, yet there's no Venom there; though there be Anguish, there's no Wrath; though they are ill-favoured, they stir no Ill-will, or produce any evil Issue. The Smitings of the Wicked are to the Godly, as they were to the *Psalmist*, no other than a precious Balm.

What the World calls Evil, is sanctified to several blessed Ends, otherwise it would never have had a Being; it serves to prove and reprove; to humble and to purge; and, to whatever Purpose it is appointed, it never returns in vain: For, as a Gift from God, it is proportioned to every Man's Needs and Strength. *I will correct thee in Measure*, saith the Prophet, *but will not leave thee altogether unpunished. Yet I will not contend for ever, lest the Spirit should fail before me.* The Apostle tells us that we have need of Patience, and Experience tells us that we have need of Matter to exercise Patience upon; and, to our several Needs, our several Chastisements bear an exact Proportion. The stubborn Child must have more Stripes than the tender-hearted; and the very Shaking of the Rod shall do more to some Tempers, than the Smart of it to others: But all need something of the afflictive Kind. He alone that is without Sin, can say, I have no need of corrective Shame, or heart-breaking, heart-purging Sorrow: None shall have more than he can bear, and none less than his Needs require. God delights not in punishing; he doth not afflict willingly, or grieve the Children of Men, as they can bait their Fellow-Creatures for Sport and Pastime; but yet he had rather hear them cry than see them perish. *Your Heavenly Father*

knoweth that ye have need of these Things too. Thou in very Faithfulness, saith David, hast afflicted me. Indeed it must be by such Stripes that we are healed, if ever we are healed at all: When therefore we can say heartily, *O LORD correct me, but with Judgment; not in thine Anger, lest thou bring me to nothing,* we shall find such Comforts issue from Afflictions, so understood and accepted, as exceed, for Fulness of Satisfaction, all the Sweets that are tasted on this Side the Grave.

The first Conflicts with Temptation, when felt in earnest, are indeed terrible; and the Cross newly laid upon the Shoulder is as an heavy Yoke just put upon the Neck, deemed insupportable; and it must be so, in order to do the Office there for which it is imposed. As a Degree of painful Inflammation is sometimes wanted to fetch out the hidden Balsam in the Blood, for the Cure of a desperate Sore, so nothing but such Tribulation can work the Patience that is necessary to heal all the sad Disorders of our Souls.

When we feel the Thorns and the Nails; when the Iron enters into our Souls; when it pricks and smarts, then it moves itself aright; then it begins to work towards a Cure; then the laudable Matter is producing that brings Health, and, like the Blueness of a Wound, cleanseth away all Evil. Only expect not these comfortable Symptoms before the Time: At the first Entrance into Tribulation it is seldom found; for Sin lyeth at the Door, and the Cross will tell us all that ever we did. I remember my Faults this Day, is ever the Language of the unexperienced Sufferer: But be not dismay'd, Sin meets us here only to shake Hands and part for ever; and, after this
Agony,

Agony, the Powers of Heaven shall come upon us, minister to our Wants, and fill up all our Desires.

Thus GOD and CHRIST; this World, or the Life that now is; the Goods and the Evils of it, whether present or to come, are all yours; and, as a Promise from the Creator, are worthy Gifts of the Almighty's Bounty.

Fifthly, But here is one Thing joined in the same Parcel, which I have purposely left for the last, as the most difficult of all to reconcile with the Notion of a good Gift from an Almighty Benefactor, and that is Death. Whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*; or the World, or Life, or Death, all are yours: Except the World, or the Life of it, all the Remainder, in this Portion of the present, could well have been spared by most People.

As for *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, I have little to say, but that formerly they were esteemed as great Gifts; but for those that succeed them at this Day in the Work of the Ministry, they are so well known to be your own already; of your own making and ordering, as well as of your own maintaining, countenancing, and preferring, that it would be ridiculous speaking of them as any Gifts unto Men. Formerly, indeed, GOD is said to give to some Apostles, to some Prophets, to some Pastors and Teachers; but as all of this Kind seems to be disclaimed on all Hands, and is concluded to belong only to the first miraculous Propagation of the Gospel, it would be Impertinence to urge any such Matter now: I shall therefore, thus dismissing this Point, finish my Design upon the Subject, with an Endeavour to reconcile Death, the King
of

of Terrors, with the Notion of a good Gift from God.

And here's a Text at Hand that does this Work all at once: *We are delivered to Death for JESUS Sake, that the Life also of JESUS might be manifested in our mortal Flesh.* Thus Death is an Advantage, for now to die is Gain: Its Commission is wholly changed: It was, Death take him to Prison, there to be reserved to the Judgment of the Great Day; 'tis now, take and dismiss him, Death, and let him find, thro' thee, a ready Entrance into the Joy of his LORD. *I desire therefore, saith the Apostle, to depart, that I may be with CHRIST; which is far better than to be without him any where, or with him any where on this Side the Grave.*

Thus our great and irresistible Enemy, that subdues and puts all under his Feet, is made our necessary Servant, and kills only what stands between us and our Happiness. Disarm'd of Sin, like a Serpent that has lost its Sting, we may safely take it into our Bosom. We may now set our Feet on this King of Terrors, and say, Thanks be to God who hath given us the Victory over him; for in this Conquest we find the Destruction of all our other Enemies. When Death has done his last kind Office upon us, then a long and hearty Farewell to *Edom*, and *Ammon*, and *Amaleck*: A long and blessed Adieu to all Offence and Dread of it; to the pricking Briar, and the stabbing Thorn. Sin and Sorrow troop before him; Want and Shame march off at his Presence. He proclaims Liberty to the Captive, and from the Oppressor sets the Oppressed free. In this his last Victory he destroys all Evil, and nothing else, for Goodness

ness is immortal; and, amongst the rest, is swallowed up himself; we die no more, Mortality itself is swallowed up of Life. He can only put us over, and set us safe on Shore; but can no more set a Foot on the Land of the Living, than Flesh and Blood can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus our LORD has made Death a Deliverer to those who, for Fear of him, were all their Life-time subject to Bondage. We may now not only with Patience, but with Desire, expect him as a good Gift; for if Tribulation and Anguish, if Sin and Mortality, if Fear and Shame, if Sadness and Dejection, only die under his Hand, then, LORD strengthen me this once, and let me die with these *Philistines*; especially too when the next Step we take is into a blessed Eternity: For as GOD and CHRIST; as worldly Good and Evil; as Life and Death, are yours, even so, as a Conclusion of all his Gifts, it is your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Yours is the Kingdom of Heaven, the Glories of which must be left within the Veil; *for Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man the Things which GOD hath prepared for them that love him.*

Thanks, then, be given to GOD for all his Gifts, whether those we have now spoken to, or those that are unspeakable. May he only grant us to desire that his Will may be done upon Earth as it is in Heaven, and then the warmest of our Hopes, both here and hereafter, shall be more than answered, when GOD crowns all his Gifts with that eternal Glory which is in his Son CHRIST JESUS our LORD; and to whom therefore, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-

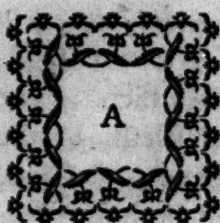
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S E R M O N XXII.

A C T S ii. 4.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance.



ALL the Tongues, then upon Earth, were not sufficient to express and worthily magnify God's holy Name for this wonderful Emanation of his Goodness to Mankind, in sending upon them the Gift of the Holy Spirit from above; and therefore other Tongues are brought down with him from Heaven, to render hereby more effectual his blessed Designs towards us.

And indeed if he gives a new Heart and a new Spirit, he must give a new Tongue too, or all would be shut up in Silence; the old one knows not how to frame itself to give out the Mind of him *who spake as never Man spake. As the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit; so none can*
rightly

rightly utter them till GOD open his Lips, and enable his Mouth to shew forth his Praise for the same.

GOD first sends forth his Son into the World, and then he sends forth the Spirit of his Son to seal to our Use all the Benefits of CHRIST's Coming in the Flesh. He ascends up on High, and then gives from thence Gifts unto Men ; all which, however manifold, are summ'd up in this one Gift of the Holy Ghost. All that CHRIST did and suffered upon Earth for our Sakes had been left incomplete, if this Power to Newness of Life had not appeared, according to his holy Word and most true Promise, *to finish the Work his Father gave him to do*, and crown all his Acts. So that we know not how to compute, when compared together, the Value of the Prophet's News,—*A Son is given us* ; or that of the Apostle,—*The Spirit of Adoption is sent forth into our Hearts, whereby we can say unto GOD, Abba, Father !* Who can estimate which is the greater Benefit, the Ascending of our Flesh, or the Descending of his Spirit ; the Incarnation of GOD, or the Inspiration of Man ? For by both is GOD truly manifested in the Flesh : In the former, by the Union of his Son, and in the latter, by the Communion of the Holy Ghost. By both we are made compleat in him, and have the full Accomplishment of all his Promises : Those of the Old Testament, That he should partake of the Human Nature, and be clothed with our Flesh ; and that great and precious one of the New, That we should partake of the Divine, and be invested with his Spirit. So that the Coming of CHRIST is truly the fulfilling of the Law,

Law, and the Coming of the Holy Ghost as truly the Completion of the Gospel.

The Time, Manner, and Substance of which wonderful Manifestation, we come now, in their Order, more particularly to look into.—And, first, for the Time.

It was on the Day of *Pentecost*, which was a great Feast under the Law; and expedient it was that so universal a Benefit should be published then when the greatest Number were present to receive, and be Eye and Ear-Witnesses of it.

The first planting of the Gospel, which was designed for the Salvation of all Mankind, was of such infinite and universal Concern, that it would have been inconsistent to have had it obscurely carried and transacted, as it were, in a Corner. And accordingly it is not huddled up, as what fears the Light, in private, but was promulged when a great Concourse of People were met together, of every Nation under Heaven, as the Scripture expresses it.

But still there is a farther Propriety in this Feast being chosen for it above all others; for it so forms a Correspondency and Harmony between the Institutions of the Old, and their Completions in the New Testament; a Circumstance we should always give earnest Heed to: So it was at the Death of **CHRIST**, he was not only slain as the Lamb was, but even at the very Time when the Lamb was slain was **CHRIST** our Passover offered for us.

Now

Now from the Feast of the Passover, reckoning fifty Days, the Children of *Israel* came to Mount *Sinai*, and there, on the Day of *Pentecost*, receiv'd the Law: And on the self-same Day, counting from *CHRIST*'s Death fifty Days, it brings you to this Promulgation of the Gospel. Thus, with regard to Time, was *Moses*, the Servant, his giving out the Spirit of Bondage, fitly connected with that Spirit of *CHRIST*, the Master of the House, which delivers us from the Slavery of it, *into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of G O D.*

Again: At this Feast, under the Law, they first put the Sickle to the Corn; and on this Day it pleased the LORD of the Harvest to reap and gather Fruits out of the great Field of the World. The very Word *Pentecost* likewise, which signifies fifty, points the same Way: This was their Season when all Debts were forgiven and utterly cancelled; the Time of their Jubilee, when every Man was restored to his original Estate; and, on the same, GOD's free Pardon of the Sins of the whole World is proclaimed, and sent forth even to the Ends of the Earth. *He gave out his Spirit, saith David, and they were created, and thou shalt renew the Face of the Earth.* The first Creation being ruinated and choaked with Sin, by a second moving of the same creating Power, he, as on this Day, forms it afresh; gives it a new Life; removes the Enmity; sanctifies again the whole Mass of Things; and, by the Change he works, restores fallen Nature to the Favour and Blessing of GOD. Thus much for the Time of this great Marvel, let us now, in

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The *second* Place, look into the Manner of it: For the GOD of Order holds a steady Course in all his Proceedings. Observe then that those who, as on this Day, received this wonderful Gift, were, by his preventing Grace, thus fitted for his Reception, by being all of one Accord in one Place, waiting for him. Unity of Heart and Mind is indeed necessary for the Reception and Entertainment of any Spirit; nor can there be Life without Harmony in any Sort of Body, whether Natural or Divine.

The Holy Ghost is the very essential Spirit of Unity and Love; he is the eternal Band that makes the Father and the Son for ever one; he unites GOD and Man in the Person of CHRIST; and it is he that makes Men to be of one Mind in an House. If they are made of one Heart, this will soon bring them all into one Place; there together waiting and making their common Supplications for that Power of Goodness from on High, which is alike wanting to all Mankind; and without which no Man can set a Foot forward in the Way to Heaven.

It is this Want of Harmony and Agreement amongst ourselves that stands between us and the friendly Influence of this Spirit of Love and Peace. This Silver Cord is broken, or at least untwisted, and then what Hope remains of good Spirits, or indeed of Life of any Kind. We may sing, and we may say, Come Holy Ghost; but if we have not prepared a quiet Lodging for him, to what Purpose do we invite him into our Quarters? To be a Witness of pious Bickerings and religious Quarrels, falsely so called?—Our Day of *Pentecost* is not as yet fully come; we ought to be found of him in Peace,
which

which we are not yet disposed to, either in Faith or Doctrine. His second Coming will be according to the Conditions of his first: Those upon whom he descends, must be of one Accord, and in one Place, there patiently waiting together, not like the Men of *Bethulia*, for four or five Days, and if he come not within those Days, then wax weary and give up all for lost. The Apostles tarried for this Promise of the Father as many Weeks, patiently abiding the LORD's Leisure. He that believeth, let him not make Haste, and presently say, *All Men are Liars*. If he happen to stay, stay for him as he hath for us; he will certainly come to all that look for him, he will not tarry. Oh tarry thou then the LORD's Leisure, he shall, at length, comfort thine Heart; put thy Trust in him, and be doing Good, and verily thou shalt be fed, and that with thy Heart's Desire.

Things thus prepared, he comes upon the Apostles in a visible and audible Manner, contrary to his usual Method of Proceeding, and the Invisibilty of a spiritual Substance. But as the Law from *Sinai* was thus honoured, so the Law that proceedeth from *Sion*, must come behind it in no Sort of Witness that might make it exceed in Glory. This rushing Wind and cloven Tongues were thus apparently sent once, to testify even to the Senses of all that had but Eyes and Ears, that Mankind were actually visited from on High. So saith St. *Peter* of it, *CHRIST being thus exalted, and having received the Promise of the Father, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear*. A Noise, as of a mighty Wind, is heard, serving as a Trumpet to proclaim his Coming, and awaken the World to give him
suitable

suitable Reception; and the Sight of fiery Tongues as so many Lights to let them see that the Day of their Visitation was now come. This Sound, we are told, is gone out into all Lands; and was indeed attended to by some in all Ages of the World: By *Enoch*, before the Flood; by *Noah*, in the Midst of it; and by *Moses* and the Prophets since.

The Gospel sets out, but in a more forcible Manner, with the same; nor could its Designs be well carried on without it: *For how should they believe, saith St. Paul, on him of whom they have not heard?* But then this Word must come from Man, only as an Eccho, as the Word in the Original importeth. The Word of the LORD must first come to us, and rebound, as it were, from us to each other; otherwise it is a Sound indeed, but to be suspected; for being formed only in the Mouth of the Speaker, and of no higher Extraction than the modulated Breath of mere human Organs; if it come not from the Heart, it will never reach the Heart, but die away like other Sounds in the outward Ear of the most attentive Hearer.

There is, to an enlightened Observer, an astonishing Affinity between the Works of GOD in the outward Creation, and the Patterns of them in the Heavens. The Wind that produces Sound, the most aptly of all earthly Elements, represents the Holy Spirit in his Nature and Manner of Working, as Fire does the Power of the Father, and Water the Meekness of the Son; and therefore are we to be baptized with them all three, that the whole Image of GOD in Trinity may rise up in the Soul and fit it for Eternity.

Sound, and Wind its wonderful Parent, is, of all Things, the least bodily, and comes the nearest to the Nature of a Spirit : Invisible as it is ; quick and active as it is ; free as it is ; blowing where it listeth ; and is the immediate Mover of Life in the Nostriis of all Creatures that have Breath. And as it holds such a Similitude in Nature, so have they truly all but one Name in the *Hebrew* Tongue, though in our Language it be called Wind in the open World, Breath, when comprised in the Body, and Spirit, when influencing the Church of CHRIST : Insomuch that the distinguishing of Spirits in their several, but similar, Operations, and the Trial and discerning of them from each other, is one of the capital Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

This which is now before us is impressed with a strong Mark of Distinction from all others ; it was not only sudden in its Rising, and mighty in its Operation, for this is common to them all, but it descends immediately from Heaven ; is felt by none but those who desire to be filled with the Spirit of Heaven ; moves nothing in them but Divine and Heavenly Tempers ; and gives no other Hope, but that of being carried back by it to the same Place from whence itself proceeded.

Thus, by its Effects, we may know what Wind blows ; whether it be from Heaven, or of Men ; a Breath from above, or an Exhalation from beneath.

The other Type was that of Tongues ; cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, sitting upon the Head of each of them : The former serves to the Benefit of those whom it fills with Goodness and Truth ; and this

this latter respects the Advantage of others : For they were hereby enabled to set forth the same, and spread abroad the Knowledge of CHRIST the Word of Salvation. As in the natural Body, the same Breath serves the Purposes both of Life and Speech ; so, in the spiritual Body of CHRIST's Church, the vital and vocal Breath must have but one Original.

Here rightly to discern, demands our utmost Skill. Than the Tongue no better Member, no more useful Gift from above : Than the Tongue, no worse Thing from beneath. As the latter is the fittest Instrument for Mischief, so the former for Good ; and both of them are alike cloven for as different Ends.

This, like the Serpent's forked Tongue, whose Word is not the same, and whose Designs are divers from all it utters ; and That, to reverse the Curse of *Babel*, to build up *Sion* in its Stead in every Nation, by speaking such Variety of Words as all might understand ; and then, with one Mouth and one Voice together, glorify the GOD of *Israel*.

And as they were cloven for this blessed End, so were they of Fire, and sat on the Head of each of them, to signify, on the one Hand, That they were not of elementary devouring Fire, but of that Kind which once burnt in the Bush, and consumed it not ; and, on the other, That a Tongue of mere Flesh, which can only churn and beat the Air, was not equal to the Work of shattering to Pieces the flinty Hearts of obdurate Sinners.

There must be something of a more active and vigorous Nature to lighten the Darkness, disperse

the Mists of stubborn Habits, and quicken the Droufiness of Men's cold, and more than half-dead, Affections. The Lip must be touched with a live Coal from off the Altar: Fire must be put into the Tongue, and Spirit into the Words, to drive away the dull Stupor, refine the Drofs, and purge out the mistaken Wisdom, the false Maxims of the deep-rooted Teachings and Manners of Men.

This is the Salting with Fire our Saviour speaks of; and, as it was much wanted, he came upon Earth to send it: God grant it may never be wholly extinguished; though it remain but as smoaking Flax, may it still fall and rest upon our Heads, making our Hearts burn within us, when the Scriptures that only relate to it are rightly opened in our Understandings. This Thought reminds me of my

Third Head, under which I was to speak of the Matter or Thing signified by all this Circumstance.-- They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance. They are first filled themselves, and then begin, like a living Fountain, to overflow for the Benefit of all that thirst and are desirous to drink.

The Holy Spirit, in all his Operations, ever acts as from a Centre, from the inward to the outward; alters the Mind before it changes the Speech; gives another Heart, before it gives another Tongue; works a Change on the Spirit, and then alters the Phrase; and it is preposterous in Nature to offer to force these Matters into any other Order.

They

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost; not with mere Wind or earthly Vapours: The hardened Standers-by said, indeed, *It was the Spirit of new Wine that had filled and intoxicated them*, strongly fermenting with their own animal Spirits: And truly, as the Prophet observes, Men may be drunken, even with their own Humours, without the Help of Wine. There are hot Humours from the Gall that may look like Zeal, and windy ones from the Spleen that may shine as the Light; but both these, upon Trial, are found wanting in that Holiness which is the essential Substance of all the spiritual Gifts of God. With this Heavenly-Mindedness were they so filled, as that there was no Room for any of these baser Guests.

Now this Filling here denotes that there are divers Measures of this Holy Spirit, of which the Apostles were not wholly wanting before they were thus visited. They had been both baptized and breath'd upon; but, according to *Elisba's* Petition, there are single and double Portions of it; sometimes it is but as a Breath, and only received; at others, as a mighty Wind poured forth, so as both to baptize and fill.

There is indeed a Portion of God's Spirit in all Things to give them Being; which, *David* says, neither flying up nor sinking down can possibly escape; but that Divine Presence which constitutes Heaven, is of an higher Order, and which so filled the Apostles, that they could neither contain it nor themselves any longer: The Fire is kindled, and they immediately begin to speak with their new Tongues. Before, they knew not how or what to speak; in

this two-fold Tongue, they find an hid Treasure both of Wisdom and Words, together with Courage and Discretion to place them properly ; for it was the same Spirit that gave the Power that gave the Utterance : Insomuch that there was neither Speech nor Language but their Voices, and the Substance of their Message was heard and understood amongst them.

This is by no Means the least valuable Part of this Day's Gift. Men may begin, and continue to speak long, at their Pleasure, and in what Language soever they are Masters ; but unless a good Spirit guide the Tongue, supply the fit Word, correct the Thought, and suggest to the Imagination, fitting, as it were, Ruler in the Intellect, guiding and governing the Hurry and Warmth of the hasty Conceptions of the Mind, no Man can answer for the Soundness of the Doctrine, or what, in the End, shall be the Issue of any Thing that comes from him.

And as he gave them Utterance, so we may conclude, tho' it be not here so set down, that he gave them what to utter also : Not the light, crude, shallow, indigested Matter that worldly Wisdom vends for Science : Observations drawn, sometimes dishonestly too, from partial Experiments, and mistaken Experiences, which rather worsen the Ear or Temper of the Hearer, than serve to the Purposes of Instruction in any Kind, when called upon to listen to for News, what has been long since laid aside for mistaken or unedifying Knowledge : But they spake as they were taught, Things worthy of their Teacher, the great Things of God, and what

what concerns the Kingdom of Heaven ; the Necessity of the Cross for the Destruction of the Flesh, that the Soul may be sav'd in the Day of the LORD.
—Thus went it with the Apostles.

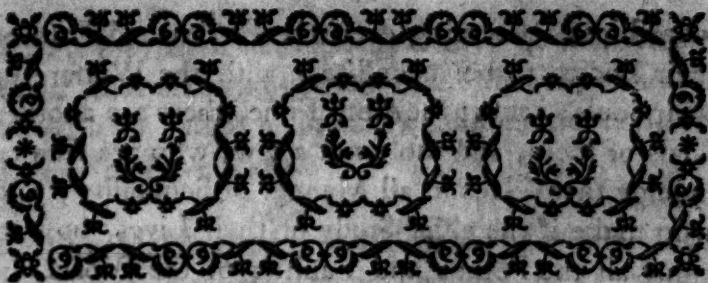
A few Words farther, concerning how it is to go with us, shall finish the Design.

About this the World is most sadly divided, both in Tongue and Heart. It is highly injurious to say of every one that hopes to have his Heart cleansed by the Inspiration of this Holy Spirit, that he aims at being ranked with the Apostles : He has not their Work before him, and consequently needs not their particular Gifts to perform it : But still he wants a great Measure of his Grace for the Work of Conversion, and to bring forth in him Newness of Life. This is a standing Miracle, wherever it is rightly performed, and the Finger of God is certainly in it.

Let then none fear to hope the obtaining from the Throne of Grace what they are bold daily to pray for, That God would make clean our Hearts within us, and take not his Holy Spirit from us : Or, as it is more fully expressed in the Collect for the Day,—God who, as at this Time, didst teach the Hearts of thy faithful People, by the sending to them the Light of thy Holy Spirit, grant us, by the same Spirit, to have a right Judgment in all Things, and evermore to rejoice in his Holy Comfort, thro' JESUS CHRIST our LORD ; to whom, with the Father and same Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

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SERMON XXIII.

JAMES iv. 4.

Know ye not that the Friendship of the World is Enmity with GOD? Whosoever therefore will be a Friend to the World, is the Enemy of GOD.

THOUGH Christians, of every Denomination, have, I think, agreed to acknowledge some Sort of Obligation to renounce the World; yet the Measure and Manner in which the Gospel commands its Followers to execute this Self-denying Doctrine, ever has been, and likely ever will be, a much-controverted Point amongst them. Those of the *Romish* Persuasion are most notoriously divided in their Practices, however, concerning this harsh but positive Injunction: For whilst one Class of them are persuaded that nothing short of a total Relinquishment, not only of the Comforts but even the Necessaries of Life, is strictly required by the Gospel-Terms; and, in Consequence of this Opinion, do actually embrace Beggary, and all Manner of
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Hardships; esteeming even the Health and Ease of their Bodies to be inconsistent with the Welfare of their Souls; yet, at the same Time, there are another Class of them, and those not a few, who are seen to indulge themselves in all Manner of Sensuality; and who make it the chief Study of their Lives, how to enjoy all the Poms and Vanities of the World, in the most operose Manner that the Pride and Luxury of their carnal Minds can suggest. These two opposite Behaviours are too manifestly inconsistent to be both true; and possibly, upon Examination, neither of them may be found to be so.

Protestant Christians are somewhat better agreed in their Opinions touching the Obligation of these distasteful and Self-denying Tenets. It being, I think, a pretty general Persuasion amongst us, that worldly Goods are a great Blessing; and that we are allowed by the Gospel to enjoy, in what Manner we please, all we can honestly possess ourselves of, provided it be not inconsistent with Health, or the worldly Welfare of the Society to which we belong: But, notwithstanding, we ourselves are not at all Times perfectly satisfied with this Decision. There are amongst us who hold Abstinence from earthly Gratifications, as a capital Part of Gospel-Perfection, and what CHRIST strictly requires of all his sincere Followers. Nor are their Reasonings from Gospel-Principles, wherewith they back this their Opinion, so readily answered as Sensualists might wish. To love our Neighbour as ourselves, cannot be denied to be a Doctrine of CHRIST; and no one, say they, can love his Neighbour as himself, so long as they are Rivals in the Pursuit of the same wordly Goods; and Rivals,

Rivals they must be, so long as they set their Hearts upon what all cannot obtain; and their Hearts must be set upon them, before they can either obtain, enjoy, or preserve them.

This Matter, however widely we may differ about it, is of the first Importance, and must be clearly discerned before the Believer can relish his Life, or taste any true Quiet of Mind. I hope therefore an Attempt to set it in a just and comfortable Light, will neither be unuseful, nor unsuccessful; especially when it is done with that Brevity and Plainness wherewith I purpose to deliver what I have found satisfactory to myself upon this Subject.

It is remarkable that almost throughout the whole Scripture, wherever the World is mentioned, it is spoken of in such Terms as sufficiently shew the Badness of its Character in the Sight of the Godly. It is considered generally as at Enmity with God, and as destructive to the Happiness and Well-being of Mankind.

Thus St. *James* delivers his Opinion of it in the Words of the Text—*Know ye not that the Friendship of the World is Enmity with GOD?* He seems to speak of it as a Thing acknowledged on all Hands. Nor does St. *Paul* make Mention of it with any more creditable Addition than as the Root and Branch of all Manner of Evil. And St. *John* positively commands not to *love the World, neither the Things that are in the World*, and that for this Reason,—*For if any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.*

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Now, here it will be necessary to observe, in order to direct our Judgment right, these two Things, which are the Hinges upon which all I have to say in Explanation of this Matter must turn, *viz.* That it is the World of Man's making that all these hard Censures are pointed at, and that it is a Friendship with It that brings down this heavy Judgment: For the World, as a Creature of God, is and must be good, and becomes evil only accidentally, by our Abuse of it, and base Attachment to it. With some Attention, and these two Hints kept in View, we shall soon clearly conceive in what Manner and Measure the World is to be renounced by Christians.

Now, there are some who exclaim most sadly against this World, as the Author of all their Sin and Misery, and are therefore for flying out of it with the utmost Haste and Aversion: But, after all this Out-cry, the World, as bad as it is, may be slander'd, and is not the original Cause of many of those Evils that weak or designing People have over hastily laid to its Charge. They forget that it is the Friendship, and not the Thing, that makes all the Mischief. Nor need it any otherwise be renounced than when, through our own Corruptions, and the Naughtiness of our Hearts, (here's the Ground of all the Grievance) we abuse what God has doubtless created and fitted for our present Support; and make it, by an evil Concupiscence, the Occasion of Sin, or estranging the Heart from God. In this Case the World, or whatever else stands between us and our eternal Happiness, must be rejected, or Perdition inevitably follows.

But how it can so come to pass that what God has made good, should afterwards turn the Occasion
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of Evil to that very Party for whose Sake it seems chiefly to have been thus constituted, may still remain a Difficulty to conceive. For the Solution of this we must look attentively into ourselves, and we shall soon discover that we are a mere Compound of Contradictions, made up of Natures as widely differing from each other as Light and Darknes. The one Part of Man is found to be material and earthly, the other is understood to be spiritual and heavenly; in the mean while each hanging after the Likeness of its respective Principle. Now, since by the one of these two Principles, (which, by the Way, is the only valuable one) a Man is related to God himself, as a Son to a Father, after whose Image the Soul was created, it may but reasonably be expected from him that he should chiefly set his Affections on those Heavenly Things that belong to his Soul, and feed his better Part; and which, by Grace, he shall be fitted to enjoy to all Eternity: And that he should concern himself no more than just needs must, with those earthly Make-shifts which he must shortly have done with, and then all Relation between him and them does of course for ever cease.

But here it so comes to pass that, by living and conversing mostly with outward Things, they find Opportunities of courting the Affections; and, being always present, press into our very Souls, and there sensualize the whole Man. Thus the Heart is gained, and the Affections set wholly on the Things that are below, to the entire Neglect of the Things that are above. The Heart, thus captivated, over-reaches the Understanding Faculties, and, together, give a Twist even to the Means of Grace, and make the Things

Things of the Spirit serve to the Purposes of the Flesh; which is the real Death of a Sinner.

From hence we may learn how the World becomes our Enemy, and why we are so earnestly called upon to renounce it: Even because it is liable, by a false Turn within ourselves, to engage our Affections so closely to itself as to make us disrelish, and consequently disregard, the eternal Welfare of our Souls. So far therefore as the World, or any Thing else, stands between us and everlasting Life, it becomes our Interest and Duty to reject it with Dread and Abhorrence. This is the Matter of a Christian's Warfare, and this is his Victory in overcoming the World; or rather that worse World of Lust within ourselves, which occasions all the Mischief; for break but the Friendship that is between us, and the World becomes an harmless Thing.

I shall try the Truth of this Observation on two Particulars which are nearest and dearest to us, from a Coalition with which the Ruin of our Souls chiefly springs, *viz.* the Riches and Pleasures of it.

And, *first*, for its Riches; which, through an evil Covetousness and base Attachment only, become a Snare to our Souls; for they become Evils only when we set our Hearts upon them, and consider them as the Foundation of our Happiness and Security; for, by thus placing them in the Room of God, we become the vilest of Idolaters. In this Light our Saviour's Censure is nothing too severe, when he pronounces that a rich Man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: For daily Experience, as well

as the Word of God, will give us full Assurance that a keen Appetite for Wealth gives great Force to manifold Temptations of sinning against God. How many horrid Crimes will Men plunge themselves into, when urged with the Desire of getting it? Nay, what Wickedness will they stick at in the Way of procuring it, when their Hearts are set upon becoming rich? Even such Men's Religion, for there is a Thing so called that has not a Grain of Goodness in it, is made a Cloak only for their covetous Practices.

Nor is an Heart, thus poisoned with an evil Concupiscence, less secure from Sin in possessing than in acquiring: For does not continual Observation inform us that great Abundance of these worldly Things have a regular and steady Tendency to lead those that love them, by gentle Degrees, into confirm'd Habits of Idleness, Luxury, Pride, Insolence, Oppression, Cruelty, and Profaneness?

And as they thus become Snares to Men's Souls, both in the Getting and Using, so are they great Evils when, in this friendly Temper of Mind towards them, they come to be parted withall: For such a Time there is appointed by an over-ruling Providence, when the best of Friends must part. Our Saviour assures us, that whoever he be who is not at least ready, for the Sake of his Soul, to forsake all that he hath, and leave Houses, and Lands, and all Manner of Temporal Goods, he cannot be his Disciple, has no Kind of Interest in his Redemption. Now, how hard a Thing this will be for those People to do who have great Possessions, those who
have

have not, may judge from their own close Attachment to much smaller worldly Matters.

Since then there is so much Danger and Mischief arising from our being hamper'd with the Friendship of these Sort of Goods, they should be carefully watch'd and guarded against, whensoever we feel their Powers encroach upon our Christian Liberty: When we first perceive that they cannot be pursued, possessed, or retained, without falling from our Love, Hope, or Trust in God: For, in order to avoid these wretched Consequences, we must continually bear in Mind, that if our Hearts be so set upon the World as to esteem any Thing it can give as our chief Good and strongest Security from Evil, we are actually fallen from God, and have set up the World in his Place; which alone is a terrible Consideration. Wo to him that laboureth so for the Meat that perishes, as to lose his Relish, or Appetite, for the Meat that endureth, and nourishes his everlasting Life; or is so immoderately careful to provide for his Body, as to neglect those spiritual Exercises that are necessary to support and procure the Salvation of his immortal Soul.

Sure I need not tell you that no unjust or trickish Means may be used to obtain this earthly Treasure, if we hope to enjoy it afterwards with a Christian Conscience: The Policy, as well as Virtue, of being honest in all our Dealings is so well known, that we have nothing farther to say of it, but only that it is a Pity it were not a little better practised.

And as we are to use these Cautions in our Gettings, so are we to be no less careful in our Manner
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of possessing worldly Goods, however honestly or laudably procured, in order to escape their becoming a Snare to our Souls. No such close Friendship is to be contracted as to hinder a quiet Parting, whenever it shall please the Divine Providence so to order it. Whensoever they are perceived to lead us to Idleness, Luxury, Pride, Oppression, Impiety, or any of those hateful Tempers which too great Plenty often betrays Men to, in any of these Cases they are to be renounced and driven from us, as our most deadly Foes, as the very worst of Evils.

Nor will this seem hard or unreasonable to any one who sincerely believes, and thinks himself obliged to conform to, the Gospel-Spirit: For hear only what our blessed Saviour says in a like Case—If thy Right Hand, or thine Eye, offend or become a Snare unto thee, cut it off, pluck it out, cast them from thee; for it is profitable that thy Members should perish, rather than that thy whole Body should be destroyed. Let us boldly apply this to our present Case: If worldly Affluence tends to estrange the Heart from God, and vainly lift it up above the common Condition of Humanity; if Riches feed Covetousness, or administer to Luxury and Vice, resolve, at any Rate, to break off Amity with them, for Ruin is nigh your Door. Better were it for such, if they were sunk again into the Bowels of the Earth, from whence we have dragg'd them, than that they should sink us down, both Body and Soul, into the Pit of Destruction. Observe, here's no Fault charged upon the Riches; they are in themselves as innocent and harmless as any of that less thick Clay that lies about them; it is our misplaced Love that gives them their destructive Power: Nor is it made a Condition of every Disciple of

CHRIST to sell all that he hath, in order to follow him; a Man may sell all, and be no nearer the Mind of CHRIST. What he requires is, that we be readily disposed to turn away from every earthly Thing that may wound our Consciences, or endanger our eternal Welfare. Be but ready to part, and you may safely keep whatever Providence has intrusted to your Care.

If any one will come after me, saith our Saviour, let him deny himself; herein stands the Cross; herein the following his Master's Steps, who came not to do his own Will, but the Will of him that sent him. And all worldly Possessions are abandoned sufficiently to answer the strictest Gospel-Command, when we fit so loose to this World's Goods as willingly to part, when he that gave is pleased to take away: And God, who searches our Hearts and tries our Reins, sees whether we are so disposed or not, without putting us to the actual Trial; and will, at the Last Day, judge us accordingly.

Secondly, The next worldly Matter to be spoken to, with which we are apt to contract a dangerous Friendship, is its Pleasures: The Lovers of which have ever been observed to be no great Lovers of God.

Indeed much Self-denial is here to be practised by every Soul that thinks to follow the Steps of a crucified Saviour to a blessed Eternity. Even rational Pleasure, or that noble Satisfaction which the Soul perceives from an Increase of Knowledge, should not be made the sole End of our Study; but how to escape the Issues of Sin, by entering into the Path that leadeth

eth from Death unto Life. Nay, the very Delight that arises in the Mind from a Conscience of having done Good, should be suspected, lest the Pride of Applause, whether of our own Hearts or others Tongues, take hold upon us, and spoil all our Goodness.

And if the single Eye be thus tender, what shall we say of sensual Pleasures, that are rank Enmity against Godliness; and, when indulged to the Height, surely destroy our discerning Faculties? They are the very Deceit of the World; and those whom nothing else could corrupt, have yet fallen Victims to their superior Powers; and under which we are in some Measure brought, if we do but prefer them in our Imaginations before our spiritual Joy in God, and the Pleasures that are at his Right Hand for evermore. God has therefore set, as it were, his Mark of Reprobation upon Sensuality, and made a Decay in Nature and untimely Death wait upon Excess in the Gratification of our Appetites; which, notwithstanding, are called Pleasures, and, it is to be feared, are the only ones Sensualists have any Savour or Relish for.

But is not this a base Abuse of the Designations of Providence, to starve the Soul, and rend the Body, by an unnatural cramming of both with what was given only for the Subsistence of the latter? And all this to get at a sordid Feeling which vanishes at its Appearance, and is sure to leave Bitterness and Disgust behind it. Call them as innocent as you please, and soften Sensuality with all the artful Terms of Moderation that worldly Wisdom can invent to palliate these Means of Destruction, yet whoever allows

himself in them to any Degree, will find, at length, such a Frame of Mind grow upon him, as will render him utterly unfit, when he is called upon, to exercise Patience and Self-denying, or any other difficult, but essential, Parts of Christianity.

Even Ease, and a constant Round of the most insipid Diversions, are apt to weaken the Mind, and render us delicate and nice; which is a Temper, however polite it may be esteemed, of all others the most unsuitable for a Christian who is engaged to fight manfully under CHRIST's Banner; and in which Warfare there are to be expected Conflicts and Severities to the End of our Lives.

What then has he to do with worldly Pleasures of any Kind, who is upon Duty, and hopes to acquit himself as a good Soldier and faithful Follower of him who was not of this World. And let all those especially whom Providence has placed above the common Level of Mankind, and given to enjoy, at Ease, the Labour and Sweat of other People's Brows; let them consider that the greatest Part of their Time should not be spent in Pleasuring, but in doing Good; in being greatly beneficial both to the Bodies and Souls of the Society of which they are looked upon as such considerable Members.

These are Employments, and the only ones, that will yield solid Satisfaction here, or open an Entrance hereafter into the everlasting Kingdom of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. It will indeed become us all, in whatever Station, to pray for such a Portion of GOD's Grace as will enable us so to pass through Things

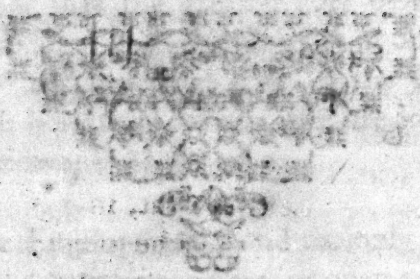
Things temporal, as that we finally lose not the Things eternal. Grant this therefore, we beseech thee, for the Love of thy dear Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

SER.



Things temporal, as that we have not the
Things eternal. Grant this therefore, we beseech
thee, for the love of thy dear son Jesus Christ
our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit,
be ascribed, &c. Amen.

SEB.

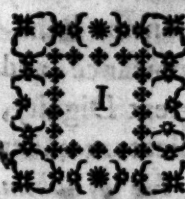




SERMON XXIV.

I TIMOTHY VI. 17.

Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living GOD, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy.

T is the distinguishing Character and peculiar Excellency of the Holy Scriptures, that they are profitable for Instruction in every imaginable Part and Portion of Righteousness; and meet, at every Turn, our Wants and Infirmities with suitable Reprehension, Counsel, or Comfort. And it has pleased GOD, their Allwise Author, in so wonderful a Manner to mix and disperse the great Variety of instructive Matter through the whole, that, in this Sortment and Disposure, each sets off the other; there's never too much of a Kind together to cloy; nor any considerable Portion of it to be read, without affording something fit for every one's Necessities, who, with an honest and good Heart, is happily busied in searching them: So that all is true in its proper

per Circumstance; all is seasonable in its own good Time; all is pertinent in its destin'd Place.

Now, as the first Beatitude may, with great Propriety, be call'd the poor Man's Scripture, so may this now before us, with equal Justice, be term'd the rich Man's Text. GOD grant that I may so handle the Matter, that both Rich and Poor may receive Benefit thereby. In aiming at which there will be no Occasion to make any formal Division; but only press the Words separately in the divine Order in which the Apostle has placed them before us in the Text; and, amongst which, the Word *charge* first presents itself to our Considerations: *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches; but in the living GOD, who giveth us all Things richly to enjoy.*

Now, a Charge is a Term made Use of to signify the most solemn Declaration of Direction for Behaviour in Matters of the greatest Importance and Weight; and is usually deliver'd with great Dignity, from the Tribunal, in all Courts of Judicature under the Dominion of Temporal Princes. *He by whom Kings reign* proceeds in like Manner: There are the Courts of the LORD's House, and he has his Ministers upon Earth, to whom he has given Power and Commandment to declare and pronounce to his People his Will, his Precepts, his Pardons, and the Terms of their Acceptance with him; that, by this Knowledge, the World may be so ordered and directed in the Ways of Righteousness and true Holiness, as that it may at length be brought to that final and blessed Period for which a good GOD could alone have created it: But who now is there that pays that
Awe

Awe and Reverence to the Will of the LORD of the whole Universe, who is able to save or destroy both Soul and Body now and for ever, as he does to the little temporary Charge of an Earthly Magistrate? Or who heeds a Declaration from the Bible, as he does the Determinations quoted from the Statute-Book?

Yet, if ye will receive it, or if ye will forbear, this now before us is still a Charge from the LORD of LORDS, directed out to the Principal of the Earth: 'Tis the open Proclamation of him *who giveth all Things richly to enjoy*, and contains in it what belongs to your Peace here; points at the true Use of all Temporal Goods, as well as to the Eternal Estate, the Inheritance of Everlasting Life in a better World to come: And it is directed and superscribed to the Rich of this World by Name, Style, and Title; and it principally concerns such of them as, according to the Fashion and Fault of the World, bestow most where 'tis least needed; feast only those who are too full already; and prefer those by their Favour who least deserve or want. To such this Charge chiefly belongs, and none else of that Denomination and Rank does it threaten, but rather tacitly calls them blessed.

But who now will care to give it out in the Name of GOD? None surely who desire and expect such iniquitous Measure should be meted out to them, lest the LORD, for this their Service, should prove a Means of keeping them back from Honour or Profit: For no longer than Men will speak good of them, in their own Judgment of Things, will they do good unto the Speaker: And who that cares for his Life
and

and Well-being in this World would chuse to spend it under a Cloud of Disgrace; and perpetually sustain, if not the Wrath, yet, the angry Brow, the scornful Look, and heavy Displeasure of the Mighty? These Considerations make the delivering out disagreeable Charges to our Betters but a cold Office; and that is the Reason it is so shunn'd on all Hands, where earthly Prudence instructs and governs the Actions of Men. Such, for fear of being hated, with *Micaiah*, the Son of *Imlah*, for not prophesying Good but Evil, turn their Ear, and learn of the Eunuch to speak nothing but what is good, and agreeable to the predetermined Designs of the Powerful, lest the Fellow be sent back with the like Charge, to be fed with the Bread of Affliction; or, at least, this Dread leads them to follow *Balack's* Counsel to his stubborn Prophet, neither bless nor curse; and so wisely become dumb, opening not their Mouths till they are asked, and then answering as is fitting for Time, Place, and Person; but, above all, as suits best with their own private Circumstances. 'Tis this Dread and Fear of losing either *Balack's* Promotion, or *Ahab's* Friendship, or perhaps only *Esau's* Portion, a Morfel or a Mess, that makes Men dishonestly shun the Prophet *Esaiah's* Occupation of taking the Trumpet and sounding an Alarm in the Ear of carnal Security, disturbing the lazy Rest of drowsy Sinners, and chuse rather the softer and safer Employment of making and stuffing Pillows for the Ease of all Elbows, and so prophesy nothing but smooth Things in the Name of the LORD. It was this made *Jonah* hurry back from *Nineveh*, and *Timothy* unwilling to give this Charge at *Ephesus*. The Apostle saw this, and therefore presses upon him the unwelcome Office in Terms rigorous, severe, and peremptory; *I charge thee*

thee in the Name of GOD, and of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, if there be any Grace to be obtain'd, or Fear of Judgment for Neglect, that thou execute this perilous Office; doing nothing by Partiality, omitting nothing for Favour or Affection.

And whosoever at this Day, in like Commission, declines the Message of GOD to his People, and draws back the Shoulder from declaring any Burden the LORD hath laid upon him, on account of fearing the Consequence, or any other sinister View; and, out of Dread to Men, acts towards any Declarations of GOD against Sin as if they were of late blotted out of the Scriptures, he has betrayed his Trust, and stands in Danger of having his Name blotted out of the Book of Life. *Whosoever is ashamed of me or my Words, saith our Saviour, in this sinful and adulterous Generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he appeareth in the Power of the Father with his holy Angels.* Thus much for the Word Charge, and the great Sin of declining, on any Account, to deliver it honestly to the Rich of the Earth, for whose Use and Benefit it is appointed.

The next Thing that meets us in the Text is the Matter and Substance of the Charge itself: *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded.* This may be called the Fruit and Branch, as what comes next may be called the Root and Ground, *viz.* Vain-confidence, as it immediately follows in Order, *nor trust in uncertain Riches.* I shall treat them separately as they stand. And, *first,* for the Fruit or Branch, *viz.* High-mindedness.

Now,

Now, Pride, Self-exaltation, Place, Precedency, and superior Distinction, have so deeply and thoroughly tinged and tintured our very Nature, ever since our first Fall from God by the working of these lofty Dispositions, that now, upon the lighting down of the least Spark of Encouragement, it immediately catches like Tinder, spreads as Fire over the whole Man; and if it happen to meet with the least Breath of popular Applause, all Nature is thereby enkindled and blown up into a Flame. Compliment, Commendation, &c. skilfully applied, will throw a Man of very mean Genius into poor *Simon's* Case in the *Acts of the Apostles*; make him seem to himself, and give out to others, that he is some great Thing. This believed, and fomented by Ecchoes from without, will soon puff up to a Who but he! Till, with *Haman*, he begins seriously to conclude, that there is none besides whom the King shall so fitly delight to honour. Alas, how contrary is this Procedure of our highly-corrupted Nature to the Designs and Instructions of the blessed JESUS; *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of Heart!* And how shamefully do we mistake the Matter, when we complain of those frequent Mortifications, which are the only Medicines that can cure this fatal Disease of the Soul! For Pride, fomented by Wealth, which is its true Ground, over-ruleth, nay, oversetteth every good Gift of God in Nature. Wealth actually hath Power to defeat them all; whose Circuit of Dominion is no less than that of the whole World. All Things under the Sun are at its Devotion; all Things below answer to its Call; all Things in outward Nature obey its commanding Power; and mightily doth it rule in the Kingdoms of Men, from the one End of the Earth to the other: It can turn
Justice

Justice into Wormwood ; rob Mercy of her Bowels ; add Dissimulation to Love ; and change Religion into Faction. In the paltry Appearance of thirty Pieces of Silver-Coin it betrayed, and nail'd the Head of all Divinity to a Cross. It rules over the Gifts of subtle and persuasive Eloquence ; it searches the Heart and tries the very Reins. When *Tertullus* had labour'd a goodly flowing Oration against *Paul*, *Felix* look'd that another, a greater Orator, should have spoken for him ; *He hop'd*, the Text informs us, *that something should have been given him* ; and had the Apostle employ'd this silent Advocate, its concise, but pithy and moving, Manner of Persuasion would likely have dash'd the others rattling Oration, and given that Success to *Paul's* Defence, which all his divine Reasoning without it could never obtain.

I will give, certainly carries Witchcraft with it ; and under such a Notion it was actually offered to *St. Peter* as the Price of Purchase for the good Gift of GOD in CHRIST : And though it could not reach that, yet, by its magical Influence, it triumphs, without much Opposition, over all besides.

Seeing then Riches can do so much, where is the Wonder they are so much set by ; or that those who possess them are in such high Account in the Eyes of Mankind, who vehemently desire to be joint Partakers with them in this all-powerful Kind of worldly Goods ? And, consequently, what Marvel if the Rich set by themselves, and become high-minded, when the World without joins a natural Disposition within thus to exalt and distinguish them ? The Blood ever rises, like Spirits in a Glass, in exact Proportion to the Warmth of Self-esteem that presses into

into it; and nothing but a great Degree of Grace can subdue and counter-act this natural Elevation. Naturalists observe that every Fruit upon Earth has its Worm bred within itself; and the natural Worm of Riches is High-mindedness; and the only Certainty that is in either is, that it will certainly at long-run, as all others, destroy its Parent. Of this we have a pregnant Proof in *Saul*, who, while in poor Estate, as the Scriptures tell us, was little in his own Eyes; but when Wealth, and the pleasant Things of *Israel* became his own, he grew so stern as to forget himself, his Friends, and his God; and, at every Word that pleased him not, was ready to run *David*, *Jonathan*, and every one that stood in his Way, through with his Javelin. Wherefore, if Riches increase, beware that you set not your Hearts upon them, for there is great Danger that the Heart will rise in Proportion with them: Nor is the Apostle any Thing too earnest in the Text, when he so vehemently charges the Rich of this World *that they be not high-minded.*

Whoever now is disposed to try the Weight and Value of this keen Advertisement upon himself, need only reflect upon the Manner and Sensibility with which he looks down upon his poor Brethren beneath him: Who, by the Way, though they wear not the same Sort of Coat, yet have all the same Kind of Skin; and, within a few Years, shall all measure alike for the Grave, whither what they carry shall be precisely as what they brought, just the same, Nothing.

Whosoever, therefore, finds himself disposed, on account of these Things, to carry his Head high, or, in his Speech and Dealings, to over-look or over-bear

bear his Brethren of mean Estate, is certainly touched with this fatal Malady. But it would be endless to go into the Detail of all the Marks and Symptoms whereby this High-mindedness is to be discover'd: And indeed it is best left to every one's private Conscience to set up the Inquisition in his own Breast; where alone it can be truly known; where only it can justify or condemn; and where only the Remedy can safely be applied. Only be so just to yourselves as to consider that it is such a Sort of Temper and Disposition as is unsuitable, and out of Character, for sinful fallen Man; and that God will certainly humble it, if we do not, by pulling down Riches, Mind, Man, and all, rather than let such an Absurdity long blemish his Creation, in one Set of Actors however. He would not suffer it in a King; *Saul* and his Family were removed for this single Crime: He would not suffer it in Angels, being lift up they fell: He would not suffer it in an Apostle, though on the Score of abundant Revelation; thence sprang the Thorn, and the Buffeting of the Messenger of Satan: Nor will he bear it elsewhere unpunished, on any Pretence whatsoever.

The remaining Part of the Charge now offers itself to our Consideration; which I called the Root out of which this Branch springs, *viz.* A vain Confidence in Riches: Here then let the Ax be applied, or it will stand and flourish to the last. *Trust not in uncertain Riches*; for 'tis the Trust in them that puts them in the Place of God, in whom all Trust should center. And this is what constitutes the worldly Man's Idolatry; their Idols are Silver and Gold. Now, whether our Trust be here or not, may easily be discovered. Man's Strength is his Confidence,
and

and where that rests there is his Trust; and whatever our Imagination flies to in Distress for Help, there is our true and genuine Reliance. By Course of Nature, every Creature, when assaulted, applies his Fears to the Part for Defence wherein his principal Strength lieth. To Man that's poor, in such Case of Danger or Need, nothing occurs or comes into his Head to turn to for Aid, but the Help of that God who has engaged to protect and comfort those that are cast down. There is his Strength; the Horn of his Salvation. But the Rich usually apply, on these disastrous Occasions, to another Sort of Security; they have Weapons of Defence, made of better temper'd Metal than the Son of *Chanaan*'s Horns of Iron, that with them they may push their Cause, till they have consumed the Adversary. The first Address of his Mind for Comfort, when assaulted with Danger, is to his Treasure, where he wisely weighs how much of that will serve to remove it; neither is God on the Occasion in all his Thoughts. Now, whatever meets the Mind first in Danger (pretend what we will to the contrary) is our highest Help, and that in which our chief Trust stands.

According to the Wise Man's Observation, The rich Man's Wealth is his Castle; whereas the poor Man's Tower of Defence is his God, into which he runneth in Fear, and is safe. Each to the City of their respective Refuge: So that those who cannot say with *David*, *GOD is my Hope and Strength*, will surely say to the Wedge of Gold, *Thou art my Confidence*. While we are dependent Beings, somewhere we must depend; and if God be God, he is our surest Defence, and therefore our best Defence, and that, were it only because the other is uncertain. *Be*

not

not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, saith St. Paul, as it comes next in the Order of the Text: And Solomon, who had more Dealings in this Matter than Paul, joins Issue with him, and has added the Wings of an Eagle to them, to express the Suddenness of their Flight. If this Uncertainty were not their true Characteristick, in our own Judgment, why so much ado about Conveyances, Assurances, and Securities, in our Dealings about them? Their being call'd here, *the Riches of this World*, is Proof enough of their Uncertainty: For, being of this World, they must needs savour of the Soil from whence they spring, which never continueth in one Stay, but is restless, fickle, transitory, and deceitful; and, as such, the Spirit of GOD, throughout the Scriptures, steadily represents them. *The Rich of this World, and uncertain Riches*, saith St Paul in the Text.—St John calls them, *this World's Goods*; and CHRIST, *mere Deceitfulness*. So David, of old, describes earthly Goods, *not as the Glory of a Man, but as the Glory of a Man's House*; and Solomon terms them, *the Blessings of GOD's Left Hand*, having fill'd his Right with more durable Substance, with Immortality, with Life Eternal. All these Admonitions are given to caution us not to exult, boast, stay, trust, or even rejoice, that a Portion of the Bowels of the Earth are made subject unto us: But rather are we to rejoice when, through the Grace of GOD, Humbleness of Mind, naked Simplicity, and an unreserved Submission to the Will of GOD, have obtained for us a Name that may be written in Heaven, and registered in the Book of Life. If, then, the World and its Goods be thus uncertain, whither shall we flee for Succour? The next Words, in course, will inform us: *Trust in the living GOD, who giveth us all Things richly to enjoy*:

Trust in the LORD, and be doing Good, and he shall give thee thy Heart's Desire: Trust in him who never faileth, in him in whom is no Shadow of Turning. He is the living GOD; every Thing besides is a dead Idol, and no better, which can neither add a single Hair to your Head, nor an Hair's-breadth to your Stature; not a Grain of Sense to your Intellect, nor a Moment's Ease to your distemper'd Body, or your restless Mind; not an Hour to your Days, nor a Moment to your Life. This Moth-eaten, Canker-and-Rust-eaten God, that must be lock'd up in a Box for fear of a Thief, trust not in it, but in the Living God, who hath Life in himself; and in his dear Son, who was able to quicken himself, and is able to quicken us also; and of whose Grace we may all receive in this Life, which will assuredly save to Life eternal all those who, through Faith in him, have laid up their Treasure in Heaven. This is the living and true GOD, who giveth all Things; *for the Earth is the LORD's, and all that therein is;* and that every Portion of it is his Gift is proved, were it only from his Power to take it away; and therefore to every Possessor we may justly say with the Apostle, on another Occasion, *If thou didst receive it, what Room for Pride, or Vaunting, as if thou didst not receive it?* It is all God's Gift; Body, Soul, Temporal, Eternal; from the Kingdom of Heaven, quite down to a Morfel of Bread. We have nothing of our own; how came we by it? Naked came we, and, but for his Blessing, naked must we go.

This, rightly understood, brings us to the last Words of the Text, *richly to enjoy*: For under this Sensibility, that all is a Gift from GOD, we enjoy ourselves, and every Thing that is about us. Let us not

not then, like those under the Law, grow tired with the Uncertainty of the Creature; but, as Men under Grace, have our Hearts distended, and even broken, with a due Sense of the Loving-kindness of the LORD; who hath, in a more especial Manner, endowed the Rich with Power and Ability not unlike his own; the Ability and Power of doing Good. In this Light Goods are Goods indeed, and are richly enjoyed; not for a Season, but from Everlasting to Everlasting. When your Cisterns are fill'd that you may drink yourselves, and then let the Streams flow forth for the Benefit of others; this is richly to enjoy indeed; it will spring up Joy in yourselves, Joy in your Brethren, and Joy in your GOD.

Having now gone through with every single Word in the Text, I shall here close the Design with this short Caution, That none conceive in his Heart that the Scriptures were written with any of that Spirit in which Men write Satyre, lest we aggravate Ill-will, instead of growing in Grace thereby. It never exposes but for Amendment, nor cautions but for Correction: And, now, GOD grant that we may all, in our several Stations, so dwell together here, as that we may hereafter meet together again in the Bosom of JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*



S E R M O N XXV.

I CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

And they that use this World, as not abusing it.



HAT we may the more readily get at the Mind of the Apostle in these Words, it will be necessary, before we can proceed to speak upon them with any Degree of Clearness, to make a critical Remark upon the Form of Expression, which I think, in our Translation, is far short of doing Justice to his Meaning. The Word here rendered *Abusing* would more aptly have fitted the whole Passage, and compleatly filled the Sense, had it been rendered, *Not using*, and as indeed some have translated it; and then the Sentence runs undisturbed in the same Shape and Form with the Context, to which it belongs,—*And they that use this World, as not using it.* I the rather insist upon this, perhaps seemingly minute, Alteration of the Expression, because, in the ordinary handling of this Subject, the Term *Abusing* has generally been let down to signify

so poorly, as if the Text only reprehended the sinful Waste of the Creature, which seems, in this Place, to be far beneath the Intent and Design of the Apostle.

He is here pointing out, and in strong Colours describing, the Powers of an Evangelical Life, or that truly Christian Temper of Mind, by the Help of which, we may hope so safely to pass thro' Things temporal, as that finally we lose not the Things eternal; and that by using the Things of the World with such Moderation, Temperance, and Sobriety, as if we did not use them. Let us only view the whole Passage together in this Light, and then judge ye what I say.

The Words of the Text are one of those five Cautions, or rather Marks, which St. Paul here gives out to his *Corinthian* Converts, persuading them thereby to the moderate and sober Use of the Things of this Life, which often prove a Snare to Men's Souls; and are therefore properly termed, The Deceits of the World.

He had been hitherto, throughout this whole Chapter, giving his Opinion or Advice concerning Marriage, and that in Answer to Questions they had propounded on that Subject, as the Beginning of it shews.—*Now of the Things whereof ye wrote unto me, how far it might be expedient or not in the present Distress; i. e.* As the ill Condition of the Times, and other Circumstances of Christians then were. And he doth it all along, not without much Wariness and Caution; *unwilling*, as he expresses it, *to cast a Snare upon them.* It is, saith he, *good to do thus;*

thus ; nevertheless, in some Cases, it is better to do otherwise : And so in several Places of this Chapter, I speak by Permission, not of Commandment ; I give my Judgment ; I suppose, and the like. But now he grows positive and peremptory.—*But this I say, Brethren, the Time is short ; it remaineth that they that have Wives, be as tho' they had none ; and they that weep, as tho' they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as tho' they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as tho' they possessed not ; and they that use this World, as tho' they used it not ; for the Fashion of this World passeth away.* You see how he treats it and all that belongs to it, as a mere Piece of Scenery, without Substance, Basis, or Foundation.

It is well worth our Observation, to see how he fortifies, as it were, his Advice with Reasons, both before and after he has given it.

First, *The Time is short ; and therefore we are to behave in this slight Manner, and with such low Esteem, with regard to outward and temporal Things ; and again, we are so to do, because our Peace and Tranquility may be yet shorter ; either we shall be taken from our worldly Enjoyments, or they will be taken from us ; for the Fashion of this World passeth away.*

The Clause I have made Choice of for my Text, does in every View admonish Christians to set light by all earthly Things ; and, with the Indifference of a Stranger or Pilgrim, soberly to use them just so far only as they are necessary Supports in our Journey towards a better World.

But

But for the present, I shall only treat it as including a Supposition or tacit Intimation, That a Christian may possess and enjoy outward and temporal Things; and that tho' he has solemnly promised to renounce the World, yet may he still, with a safe Conscience, use it; on Condition only that he attend to this Counsel, and use it with that Indifference of Mind and Quietness of Affection, as though he used it not.

This single Caution, honestly attended to, may be sufficient to direct our whole Behaviour towards the World, without prescribing the Limits, or precisely butting and bounding every minute Circumstance of the human Life, wherein temporal Things are necessarily mix'd, and will have their Share of Importance.

I am sensible that it may be here asked, To what Purpose may this serve? Or why should needless Pains be taken in asserting or proving the Rectitude of that which human Nature is, of itself, more than enough inclined to? And indeed it cannot be denied, but that for the most Part we are apt to offend this Way, by too much attending to earthly Things; by too close an Attachment to worldly Goods. But since the grand Deceiver of Mankind, of whose Wiles it concerns us not to be ignorant, does sometimes transport us to the other Extreme, *touch not, taste not, handle not*, under a plausible Colour of a Kind of meritorious Self-denial and Mortification; all which Things are to perish with the Using; and are, at best, but a Kind of bodily Exercise, that profiteth little; some Caution in this Case therefore may not be without its Use: Con-
sidering

sidering too, that by pushing these Matters beyond the Staple of our present mix'd and frail Condition, the Process of our Salvation may be as effectually hindered as by a blameable Remissness.

Every Gift of GOD is good; and when the various Designations of his Providence, with regard to our Situation in this Life, are devoutly considered as the Appointment of that gracious Being who will have all Men to be saved, and that he has placed every one under those Circumstances that are fittest to bring him, thro' CHRIST, to himself; under such a resigned Temper of Mind, whatsoever is, is really best. That a Christian thus minded may safely use this World, which some rigid Professors have denied, is what I shall now endeavour to make good from the Word; as well knowing that our own private Judgments are not safely to be trusted in this Matter.

When the Almighty took a Survey of his Works, at the first Creation, it is said, *GOD saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good*: Thus it was in the Beginning. And lest we should think that, together with Man, the whole Creation had utterly lost its original Goodness through his Fall, the Apostle speaking of it now, in its present Situation, says the same still; *every Creature of GOD is good*, and nothing to be refused. To the Good all Things are good, when sanctified, to their respective Uses, by Faith and Prayer.

What indeed is Evil, but Good misplaced, and, through Ignorance or Ill-will, perverted and abused? And although, by our Fault, they are thus often made

made the ready Instruments of Sin and Unrighteousness, yet for this we should not quarrel with the Things themselves, but with our own wretched Tempers and base Dispositions, whereby these Gifts of God are corrupted and abused.

Covetousness, for Instance, is not the Fault of the Gold; neither is Gluttony the Fault of Meat; nor Drunkenness of Wine; but merely of an evil Concupiscence in the Mind of Man, which leads him continually to blunder in the Application.

Now, seeing Providence has set these, and many other such like Things, before us, and placed no Cherubim or Flaming Sword to keep us from them, where is the Sense of vilifying, or rejecting with affected Contempt, what has no other Evil in it, that I know of, except it be a Capacity of being abused by us to evil Purposes.

Would it not be more agreeable to the Truth of Things, to labour rather to fetch Good out of every Thing that comes in our Way, by applying of it to the Glory of God, the Good of our Brethren, and the Furtherance of our own Salvation? To which blessed Purposes, when in Hands directed by an honest and pious Heart, they are altogether as ready to serve. Indeed I scarce know any Thing but what may be thus beneficially entertained, if our Hearts be but right in the Sight of God. The most distast'rous Circumstances, whether respecting Self or Friends, call for the Exercise of those truly Christian Graces, Patience and Pity; and the milder Fruits of Prosperity afford constant Food for Christian Charity.

Thus

Thus every Thing about us retains, or is restored to, its original Design, and becomes again truly good to us ; whereas, on the other Side, by despising, rejecting, and sequestering ourselves from having any Share in these outward Dispensations, we do Wrong to the Giver and Disposer of all Things; and betray, in such Refusal, more of a morose cynical Humour, than of the true Evangelical Spirit: A Kind of ill-conditioned Pett, that, because it cannot have every Thing to its Fancy, turns away its Face and will have nothing.

Thus those affected Severities of some, who call'd themselves Philosophers in former Times, (for the Temper's as old as human Nature) are justly to be blamed, as tending to fow the Mind and aggravate Discontent, more than to humble the Heart, and dispose it to a quiet Submission to the Creator's Will.

The Opinion of an Heathen, in this Matter, is worth repeating: " Avoid, saith he, slovenly Attire and professed Hatred against Money; labour to have all Things unlike to Worldlings within you ; but, in the outward Modes of Indifference, contradict them not ; study to lead a better Life, and in that only differ from your Neighbour. He is a great Man that can use Earthen Vessels as though they were Silver ; neither is he less that useth Silver as though it were Earth. 'Tis the Part of a weak Mind not to be able to endure Prosperity."

The Christian is forbidden to love the World, or the Things of it, and that because it is inconsistent with the Love of God, but we are no where denied the

the Use of them ; for then, as the Apostle speaks in another Case, we must needs go out of the World. Our Conversation may be in Heaven whilst we walk on Earth : Here we may live and move, though our Thoughts and Affections aspire thither.

Mankind came naked into the World, without Cloaths to warm, or Arms to defend them ; nor is our Food provided to our Hands, as it is for the Beasts ; neither are there Places of themselves fitted for our Habitation. Nothing can be prepared for our Use, without some Labour and Industry ; so that the Necessities of common Life do engage us in worldly Affairs ; nor is Religion hurt by attending them : Nay, it commands us to abide in our Calling, to provide for those that are our own ; not to be slothful in Business, but to be so industrious as that we may have lack of no Man : For Want will stir Wrath, as readily as Abundance will Pride.

It is not the outward Thing that defileth a Man, but what comes out of him, and proceeds from the inward Man of the Heart. *Abraham* was rich in the Sight of the World, in Silver, and Gold, and Cattle ; but, in the Eye of God, a mere Pilgrim, and rich towards him only in Faith ; as were *Job*, and *David*, and *Solomon* ; who all meet with Blessedness with poor *Lazarus*, in faithful *Abraham's* Bosom. And CHRIST promiseth his Disciples that, with the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, all outward Things should be added unto them : They should now, in this Time, have Friends, and Houses, and Lands, together with their Persecutions, as Comforts, among all those Troubles which the unbelieving World should inflict upon them.

A very

A very carnal Gospel it is, doubtless, that a late *Roman* Author teacheth, "That CHRIST came into the World to establish as well a temporal as spiritual Monarchy in his Church; and that Men, being but Flesh and Blood, must be invited into it by the Abundance of all worldly Poms and Preferments: That Religious Policy must so order itself as to comply with the corrupt Interest of Mankind, and to prevail with them by such Motives as are most apt to work upon frail Appetites; which, without Riches, Honours, and Voluptuousness, cannot be done." I say, though this Doctrine be such as may own *Mahomet*, or even *Lucifer* himself, for its Author, rather than CHRIST and his Apostles; yet, on the other Hand, it is an Error of others who affirm that a Christian cannot, with a good Conscience, hold any earthly Possession; the Practice whereof is such a Burden, as they, who encourage it in others, will not so much as touch with one of their own Fingers.

There is a Season when the poor repenting Sinner, unable to bear the Loathsomeness of his Nature, when first truly convinced of Sin, flies with *John* the Baptist into the Wilderness, and there tastes of every worthy Fruit of Penance: So there was a Time when it was fit for *Daniel* to refuse the King's Delicacies, and chose rather to feed on Pulse; yet we read that, at other Times, he received great Gifts, and accepted the Government over the whole Province of *Babylon*. There was a Time when *St. Paul* took Pleasure in Necessities; when he was in Hunger and Thirst, in Cold and Nakedness; yet he tells us also that he knew how to abound, (which, as Matters go, seems as high a State of Christian Perfection as the other) and could readily undertake to repay whatever

ever *Onesimus* had purloined from his Master *Philemon*.

It is indeed one of those signal Characters that *St. Paul* gives of them which should depart from the Faith, and give Heed to seducing Spirits, That they should command to abstain from Meats, and so corrupt the profitable and religious Exercise of Fasting, by turning it into a superstitious Observation of this or that Kind of Food, and this with an Opinion of Merit and Satisfaction.

Temperance is doubtless a great Virtue, but ceaseth to be such when intemperately used: And many who, for Contemplation's Sake, have thought in this to imitate *Elias*, and *Daniel*, and *John* the Baptist, have, at length, approached nearer to Madness than to Prophecy.

And therefore, that neglecting of the Body, mentioned, *Colossians* ii. in not having any Honour, *i. e.* no Respect, or Regard, to the satisfying of the Flesh, *St. Paul* tells us, hath indeed a Shew of Wisdom, and of great Forwardness to serve GOD. But, in Truth, these affected Severities, though never so plausible, come short of that true and perfect Holiness, that Newness of Life, which the Gospel holds forth in the Name of JESUS CHRIST: And when he pronounces that heavy Wo upon the Rich, he immediately tells us whom he means; even such who so receive their Consolation in this World, as to be forgetful of another. When he said to the young Man, *If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, and give to the Poor*, he recommends it not as an universal Evangelical Counsel, seeing we may sell all, nay, give our Bodies

Bodies to be burnt, and still perish for want of the true Christian Charity: But the Advice is personal, and given by way of Trial, to convince this brisk Pretender of that worldly Love which obstructed his Way to Heaven; of his Self-deceit; in thinking that he had done all for his Salvation that could be done; of his Unsoundness and Insincerity of Heart, who could not suffer all Things for the Excellency of CHRIST, and the Knowledge of God in him.

Let no Man deceive himself, in thinking that the Way to commend us to God is to renounce the Use of his Creatures. 'Tis Repentance and Faith only, which lead to Conversion and Newness of Life; these are the true Terms of Acceptance with God, as they are solely his Gifts through CHRIST by the Ministry of the Spirit.

But we are ever for beginning the Work of our Salvation at the wrong End; and, instead of seeking first to correct the Ground of the Heart, and see that it be turn'd towards God, we usually set out with pretending to pick a Quarrel with his Creatures. What is this but, instead of laying the Axe to the Root of the Tree, to be impertinently employed in pruning the Branches, when the Stock all the while stands securely, and gathers Strength in the Earth.

If we live in the Spirit we shall, of Consequence, be instructed how to walk in the Spirit; and then we shall come into none of those Questions, Why is this? Wherefore is that? For, to such a sanctified Heart, all the Works of the Lord will appear exceeding good; and that he hath made all Things for their respective Uses. As all Things are for Good to the Godly, so
to

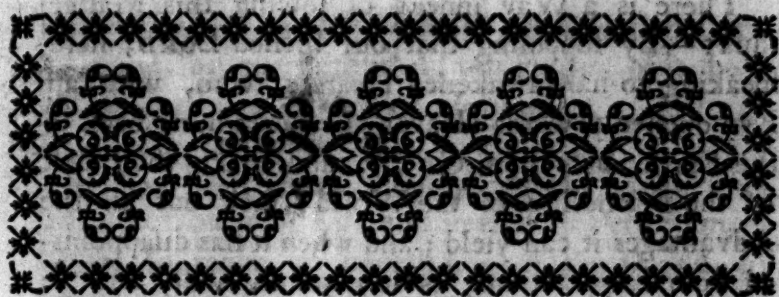
to Sinners only are they turned into Evil: But as his Ways are plain to the Holy, so have they ever been Stumbling-blocks to the Wicked.

But it is Time that we bring this Matter to a Point, and have done.

The Sin of the World, then, is the Love of the World; and when the Lamb of God dissolves that Connexion by the Love he sheds abroad in our Hearts, both Sin and Danger from that Quarter is actually taken away. Sin, the Sting of Death, being thus taken out of the World, it becomes quite an harmless Thing, and may be safely used, even as safely as though we used it not. But till then, all Directions, whether about Use or Abuse, are little better than so much Lip-labour lost.

We may observe that our Common Prayer begins with Directions to ask those Things which are necessary for the Body as well as the Soul; and concludes, as I shall now do, with beseeching the Almighty to give us such a due Sense of all his Mercies, that our Hearts may be unfeignedly thankful for all the Blessings of this Life; but, above all, for the Redemption of the World by our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; and to whom therefore, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

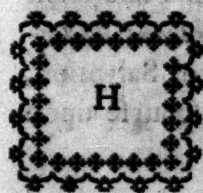
S E R-



SERMON XXVI.

LUKE xvi. 9.

Make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.



AD not this Sentence dropt from the Lips of Truth itself, and proceeded immediately from the Mouth of the Son of GOD, it would never have entered into the Hearts of the best Believers, consistent with the rest of the Gospel, to have conceived it. That *the Mammon of Unrighteousness*, on every Side so bitterly exclaimed against, could be any ways so employed, as to further the Salvation of our Souls; this is marvellous in our Eyes, and highly magnifies and commends unto us the Riches and Grace of that Almighty Power, who thus brings Good out of Evil: All whose Works are indeed Wonders; Wonders of Wisdom and Love.

VOL. I.

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There is a Way indeed of solving this Matter thus:—By supposing that our blessed LORD, here speaking to half-awakened Hearers, who, with an Eye opened towards Heaven, in Heart hung back to the Earth, bids them Go try, and make their Best of the Friendship of the World; suck out all the Advantages it can yield; and when it has disappointed your Expectations, as it certainly will, and ye are thus experimentally convinced of its Emptiness, ye shall then, tired and laden with the gross unweildy Burden; ye shall then, I say, be fitted to come unto me for that Rest unto your Souls, which I know this World cannot give you. Under the Impression of such a Sensibility, ye shall be *received into everlasting Habitations; for whosoever cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out.*

I have nothing against this; it is good Sense and sound Doctrine; but as the more literal Meaning is the most obvious, *viz.* That, by GOD's abundant Grace, we may so deal with the *unrighteous Mammon*, as to set forward thereby our eternal Salvation, I shall form the Plan of my ensuing Discourse upon this Interpretation; shewing,

I. How, and in what Manner, this is to be done.

And then,

II. I shall raise some useful Reflections on the Vanity and Emptiness of it, when any other-wise employed.

First, then, I am to shew; according to the most obvious Interpretation of the Words of the Text, how we are to behave towards the *Mammon of Unrighteousness*,

righteousness, so as to set forward our Salvation thereby; and, by our faithful Administration of it, be at last *received into everlasting Habitations*.

It has been much disputed which is the most laudable Course of Life and nearest to Perfection, — Either to make an honest Use of the World, by following our Civil Employments, and doing good Offices to all about us, both in private and public Capacities, by an active and sociable Conversation; Or to sequester ourselves from Business, to relinquish our Callings, and retreat out of the World, that we may wholly betake ourselves to Prayer and Contemplation, and the more immediate Exercises of Devotion.

This latter has been so highly commended by some, that none are by them thought worthy of the Name of Religious Persons, but those who cloyster themselves up in a Monastery.

But if we consider it with an open Mind, we shall find, that for a Man to be doing Good, in every Stage of his Existence, comes nearer to the Likeness of his Heavenly Father's Image, as it shone forth in the Face of his Son JESUS CHRIST, *who went about doing Good*, than to be buried, as it were, alive in an useless Privacy, under the plausible Pretence of Mortification and Devotion; and, in the mean Time, being profitable scarcely to any one. This is indeed an easier and more lazy Sort of Virtue than bustling through the Croud that are going a contrary Way; but, at the same Time, favours of that Kind of cowardly Prudence, that advises to quit the Field of Battle, to avoid the Fa-

tigue and Hazard of an unsuccessful Warfare ; and usually proceeds from a poor and abject Spirit, rather than that Generosity and Nobleness of Mind that inspirits a faithful Soldier of JESUS CHRIST. Whilst we dwell here together, as Fellow-Citizens of the World, every one of us have a Kind of Right and Interest in each other, and our Country has a Right in us all. When, therefore, by honest Arts and Industry, by useful Study and Christian Conversation, we have made ourselves able to do good to others, it will then behove us to be ready and willing to do it ; to be beneficial to all Men, and in an especial Manner to be charitable to those who come under the Power and Want of our Assistance.

When every one of us singly pray, not for My, but for Our daily Bread, the very Form of Expression intimates and supposes that others should enjoy it with us. GOD has not made us absolute Proprietors, but Stewards only, of what he has committed to our Charge : From him, as chief LORD, Mankind hold all that they have ; and some Acknowledgment is to be paid for his great Bounty in our Beneficence to others.

Indeed Flesh and Blood may persuade us, nay, the Law of Man will allow us, to do what we will with that we take to be our own : But if we consult the Oracles of GOD, and make the Gospel of CHRIST the Measure of our Understanding, we shall find, that to give away our Bread to the Hungry, to clothe the Naked, to instruct the Ignorant, and such like Offices of Charity, are such necessary Duties, as for the Want of which we shall one Day stand with

with those on CHRIST's Left Hand, to hear that dreadful Sentence pronounced against us,—*Depart from me ye Cursed!* Indeed to those that are in **CHRIST JESUS** all Things are new; every Thing is revers'd, as it were, and appears in a quite different Light from what it did before. No Wonder therefore that the respective Children of the two Kingdoms appear as Monsters to each other, and, in their Turns, devoted to Error and Destruction; or as St. Paul strongly expresses it, *In CHRIST the World appears crucified to me, and I no less unto the World.*

Hence it is that the Things of this World, which we are so sure and so ready to call our own, and thereby make them an *unrighteous Mammon*, are by our Saviour, in this very Chapter, emphatically called, *That which is another's*; either as belonging to God, by whom we are only intrusted with them; or to our Brethren, to whom it is, or should be, dispensed; or else, because, at length, in spite of us, it must cease to be ours any longer, and go into some other Hand. *If*, saith he, in the Words following the Text, *ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own?* As if he should say,—What Hope is there that God will give you those Heavenly Riches which were prepared for you, and would be your own to all Eternity, if, by your unfaithful Administration of this World's Goods, you make and prove yourselves unworthy of the other.

Here then we may see how, and in what Manner, this *Mammon of Unrighteousness* may be turned to

Benefit, and so used as to reflect no small Advantage upon our very Souls. In this Point stands the Good of every temporal Thing, whether of Mind or Body; viz. that the Possessor has That to give up in Sacrifice to God, which another has not. Observe only how the Apostle chargeth them that *are rich in this World, that they be rich in good Works*; that he counts Riches likewise, and the better of the two; for, saith he, *hereby they lay up, the Original is, they treasure up, for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come*; which is equivalent to the Expression in the Text, that they may, by Friendship so made, be *received into Everlasting Habitations*; or that they *may lay hold on Eternal Life*.

Here we may take Notice what some learned Men have observed, that the Word, which is here rendered *a Foundation*, signifies likewise a *Bond* or *Bill of Obligation*, whereby we take Security for the Repayment of what we have lent or laid out, and so may reckon upon it as a Part of our Treasure; which cannot be so properly said of a Foundation, as it may be of a Bond, in the Sense I now speak.

And in this Light also may best be understood that of the second Epistle to *Timothy*, *The Foundation of the LORD is sure, or the Obligation of the LORD is firm, having this Seal*; because such Contracts use to be ratified by putting a Seal to them. So that St. Paul, in the fore-cited Place, intimates, *That they who do good Works, and are ready to distribute the otherwise unrighteous Mammon, get, as it were, a Bond or Obligation from God, by which he binds himself to make good to them whatsoever is so laid out*: Agreeable to that of Solomon, *He that bath*

bath Pity on the Poor, lendeth to the LORD, or helps to keep even the Balance of his Providence; and look what he so layeth out, it shall be paid him again,

Thus we see that GOD requires us to behave in this Manner towards outward Things, not only for the Sake of our Brethren, but for our own Soul's Sake too. For he could, if he pleased, have fed the Poor without our Help: He fed *Elijah* once by Ravens; and could have done it again, without sending him for Relief to *Sarepta*, if he had not thereby intended a Kindness rather to the Widow who gave the Alms, than to the Prophet who received them; and in this Light our Saviour places the Passage when he recites it.

But that we might be Fellow-helpers to the Designs of his most gracious Providence; tho' he could have created enough for all Mankind to abound with, or else made so few, that what he had created might have been more than enough for them; yet he rather so ordered it, that, even in a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, the Poor should never cease out of it: And therefore saith he a second Time, repeating it very emphatically,—*I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine Hand wide unto thy Brother, to thy Poor, and to thy Needy in the Land.*

The whole Process of Providence in this Matter stands thus:—He that supplies one with more than enough, intends thereby to make good the Deficiency to those that have less, by his Ministry; that the Superfluities of some might be the others Necessaries; that both Poor and Rich together, from him that made and
ordered

ordered both, might, at length, receive a Reward; they of their Patience in wanting, and the other of the Exercise of Charity in supporting them.

The Scripture often expresses Liberality to the Poor under the Metaphor of Seed sown. Observe only the Strength and Exactness of this Representation: The Husbandman casts it out of his Hand, and the Ground receives it: Nay, tho' it seems to rot in the Bowels of the Earth, and become we know not what, yet he that sowed it counts upon it as laid up in Store, and expects a full Crop in due Season; whereas, by fondly keeping it close at home, he might have hoarded it up for Worms and Mustiness, and so utterly have lost the Fruits of its Increase.

Just thus it is in the Case before us: That which we give out as an Issue of Love and Good-will, seems indeed to be gone out of our Power to recall; and what becomes of it we scarcely know; But this we know, and may depend upon, That, at the Harvest in the End of the World, we shall, for every Grain so scatter'd, reap an Hundred-fold: Whereas, to carry on the Allusion, in storing it up here, which yet we must part with at last, we may perhaps leave it for Rioters and Harlots, in whose Hands it shall corrupt and putrify, and ourselves lose the Fruits of it for ever.

I know no other Way of rendering it conceivable how we may make such *Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness*, as will receive us into *Everlasting Habitations*; which, to shew, was the first Part of my present Undertaking, and which now leads me to my

Second

Second; which was to raise some Reflections on the Vanity and Emptiness of it, when any otherwise employed than in thus making Friends with God, who receives Mankind into his Everlasting Kingdom, only through the Merits of CHRIST, and the Sanctification of his good Spirit.

Let us, therefore, seriously consider how vain and deceitful a Thing this World and its Friendship is; and how it falls short of our Expectations in every Point of its promised Consolations; inasmuch that it will be our Wisdom, in every Design of temporal Advantage, to keep our Hopes and Expectations low; to clog them with Suspicions and Abatements; for, otherwise, they will assuredly fail and cheat us; rendering what was ardent in the Desire, flat and insipid, if not burthensome, in the Possession.

It is but a sad Thing to consider, and yet 'tis every where to be observ'd, with what Toil and Care many pursue the *unrighteous Mammon*, and heap up Riches, not knowing who shall gather them: Nay, perhaps, which is still worse, already seeing which Way they are like to be disposed of; and yet, rather than do any Work of Charity or Beneficence, the only Way to purge out their Unrighteousness, they will leave them to be squander'd away by Fools and Prodigals; whilst they find, at last, by sad Experience, that the Sins, by which they got their Wealth, cleave faster to their poor Souls in the other World, than the Estates, and Honours so gotten, are like to stick by their Posterity in this.

It

It is remarkable what one of our Historians (*Dugdale*) observes,—“That of some hundred antient Families, and Noble, that he takes Notice of a few Centuries ago, there are at this Day scarce ten remaining, and those few sunk far beneath the Splendor of their Ancestors.” So easily can Almighty God, when he thinks fit, blow upon, and blast the Establishments of the greatest and wisest of Men. And surely it is the gracious Hand of Providence, could we but see it, that in this Manner makes the World to totter, as it were, and reel under us, that we may look for our Stay and sure Footing in Heavenly Places, where only must be our Rest for ever. It would be our Wisdom therefore to give our Spiritual Concerns, at all Times, the Precedency; placing the Things of this World, no Matter whether Righteous or Unrighteous, still in a due Subordination to them.

For GOD is the LORD and Giver of all, and the final enjoying of him is the ultimate End of our Life here, and will be our only Happiness hereafter to all Eternity.

But still let all make grateful Returns for his Bounty, to whom he has given the Things of this World; and this we cannot do otherwise than by making a godly Use of them; for all the Thanks we can pay, can no way benefit our Almighty Benefactor. *My Goodness*, saith the Psalmist, *extendeth not unto thee*: Yet when GOD's Hand is in this Manner opened wide to us; when our Cup is full and running over, then we should signally testify our Good-will, by honouring the LORD with our Substance, tho' he himself can receive nothing
at

at our Hands. Thank him, were it only for this gracious Declaration by his Son, that these Things might be so used.

And if this be so, how ill do those acquit themselves, whose only Care and Study it is, how they may make the World yet more vain, by trifling it away in Things that do not profit; and, instead of making Friends with it of any Kind, render themselves odious thereby both to God and Man?

Some Heathen Philosophers have thought that when a Man became useless, it was a Duty to make himself away; but we have not so learn'd CHRIST; we may serve God in him, by Patience, Hope, and Heavenly Desires, when Age or Sickness have disqualified us to serve him by an active Life; and, under those Circumstances, see into the other World by a stronger Light: But both Christians and Heathens will proclaim them to be the Shame of Nature, who wilfully make themselves unprofitable, and live in Health and Wealth to as little Purpose as if they were disabled by Poverty, Sickness, or Age: And when they have Death and Judgment before them, and are hastening away to Eternity, can spend their whole Time and Substance in Sloth and fruitless Sensuality; as if God gave Gifts only to be dream'd upon, and their Wits were not so far awakened as to consider what it is to be, not to say a Christian, but a rational Creature! Men may say indeed that they were born to Wealth, and what they make this Use of is their own by Inheritance; but still, I say, none are born to be useless; nor should Luxury and Idleness be entailed with an Estate.

It

It should rather follow, that they who are most able should be most ready to do Good; and shew themselves thereby thankful to God, who puts that Bread into their Mouths, which others are forced to stoop for to the Ground. God never enriches the Soil to the End it should bring forth no Fruit, nor bestows Talents, only to be wrapt up in a Napkin; but where much is given, thence ever much will be required. He never gave Men Power for the Sake of Oppression, nor Wit to dispute his Providence and mock at the Gospel, any more than he has opened to them the Treasures of the Earth, that they might turn them into a *Mammon of Unrighteousness*.

This therefore it will behove us seriously to consider, lest we forget God: — That howsoever we make Friends or Foes, use or abuse the Things that are present, it will not long be in our Power to do either; such a small Portion of Time and temporal Things is given to improve us, and we them, that our having passed thro' this wretched Vale, might, in the End, redound to the Glory of God and the Benefit of our immortal Souls. But whether we improve them and they us, or both be made worse for having met together, Time and Temporals will alike waste in the Hands of those that must waste with them; but the Result of the whole Process must be eternally accounted for. The Glass is turned upon us, and it is incessantly running; and whatsoever we are now thinking, or saying, or doing, in Good or Evil, is actually at Work to fit our Nature and fix our Fate, in the one or the other, to all Eternity,

All

All Nature fades as a Flower, and is every Moment tending to Corruption and Dust; and can we then have Inclinations to wanton with these Ministers of Fate, and waste so much Time and Temporals in providing for, and pampering a Lump of Clay, whilst our better Part (which is to live for ever, and is placed here to be tried and fitted for *Everlasting Habitations* in Good or Evil) is utterly forgotten? We have Souls originally depraved and turned from God, enslaved to the World and the Flesh; and these must be renewed and regenerated here, before the Heavens can receive them; and shall we stand all the Day idle or trifling, as if there were no Work to be done in the Vineyard? Or, which is still worse, turning these Means of Grace into Lasciviousness; and instead of *making Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness*, making them the ready Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin, by seeking no other Friendship or Habitation but where they preside?

What then remains but that, whilst we live in this World, we beg of God to enable us to look above it; for if he enlighten not our Eyes, we shall assuredly sleep in Death.

To awaken us out of this Sleep, thou camest in great Humility to visit us, O blessed JESU, and teach us to turn the very Things of Darkness into an Armour of Light! Perfect the Work thou hast begun in us, O gracious God, that, at thy second Coming to judge the World, we may be found acceptable in thy Sight; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-

All Nature fades as a flower, and is every mo-
ment tending to Corruption and Dust: and can we
then have Inclination to remain with these Inimi-
fers of Life, and waste so much Time and Tem-
porals in providing for, and pampering a Body of
Clay, whilst our better Part, which is to live for
ever, and is placed here to be tried and tried for Eter-
nity, is allowed to Grod (or Evil) is surely forgot-
ten? We have Souls originally created and im-
aged from God, enlived in the Word and that Life,
and their souls be renewed and regenerated here,
before the Heavens can receive them; and shall we
stand all the Day idle or trifling as if there were no
Work to be done in the Vinyard? O how much will
we be spending these Minutes of Grace into Eternity
use; and instead of making Friends of the Kingdom
of Unhappy, making them the ready Instru-
ments of Unrighteousness, and thus by seeking no
other Friendship of Habitation, but where the pe-
nalty is, and the reward is, and the crown is, and
the glory is, and the life is, and the kingdom is,
shall we then remain but clay, whilst we live in
this World, we beg of God to enable us to look
more at, for it he enlighten not our Eyes, we shall
naturally sleep in Death.

To awaken us out of this Sleep, thou canst in
great Humility to visit us, O blessed Jesu, and teach
us to turn the very Things of Darkness into an Ar-
mour of Light! Perfect the Work thou hast begun
in us, O gracious God, lead us at thy second Coming
to judge the World, we may be found acceptable in
the sight of whom, with the Father and the
Holy Ghost, be glorified, etc. Amen.



SERMON XXVII.

LUKE xvii. 32.

Remember Lot's Wife.



IN this short Sentence of our blessed Saviour there is included an inexhaustible Fund of valuable and important Matter; and it may encourage us to search into the Treasure it contains, were it only because it is closely compacted in few Words, and so in no Danger of becoming burdensome to our Memories. What gave Occasion to its being here introduced, was a two-fold Similitude CHRIST observed to be between the Days of the Son of Man and the Days of *Lot*; and that in respect both of the Suddenness of the Destruction, and a like carnal Security in the Persons upon whom it had and should come. There is likewise Reference made, in this little historical Dash, to two very remarkable Monuments of God's Judgment upon Sinners, of very different Complexions; the Destruction of *Sodom* for resolute Sin, and the Punishment of *Lot's Wife* for wavering Virtue.

To

To this latter Consideration the Text more immediately directs our Thoughts, and to it therefore I shall strictly adhere: And a choice Lesson of Caution will it teach all those who are once happily broken off from the base Body of incorporated Vice and Error; who have forsaken the Vanities of a wicked World, and who find themselves free, as having escaped the Nets, and Traps, and Snares of ungodly Men: An excellent Admonition is here, I say, held forth to all such, that they never entangle themselves again, by so much as turning to look back towards Things of this Nature with Complacency, lest they fall from their own Stedfastness, and their latter End become worse than the first. Herein surely is great Danger, or this Example had never been produced.

Perseverance is a capital Point in Religion; and it will be found a much easier Matter to convert and make Profelytes, than to produce an old Disciple; *Come unto me* being much more frequently obeyed, than *Abide in me* is complied withall. Nature therefore wants much Precaution here; for as there is in it a tender Part, not able to endure the Cross, and for which we need the Virtue of Patience, so also is there in it a Proneness to Inconstancy, a flitting Humour, not able to endure the Tedioufness of any Thing long; and, as a Cure for which, we no less want the Virtue of Perseverance. Many Examples of this Levity in our Tempers, and the great Danger of it, are therefore left us upon Record.

The *Israelites*, after they had passed the *Red Sea*, and all the Perils of the waste and howling Wilderness; when they were now come just up to the very Borders of *Canaan*, even There say, We were better

better in *Egypt*; let us make a Captain, and return thither. And as the Old Testament furnishes us with this, so doth the New with another equally striking. The *Romans*, at first such glorious Converts, that *St. Paul* boasts on their Behalf, that all the World spake of their Faith, yet when Trouble arose because of the Word, and Dangers to the Preachers of it lay in the Way, all these Highly-faithful forsook him to a Man: *None stood by me*, saith he. Some such forward Professors have we found amongst ourselves; whom, like *Daniel's Image*, from an Head of fine Gold, you may trace downwards till you meet with Legs of Iron and Feet of Clay. To these we may join the Half-persuaded, the Almost-christians; who, in a Kind of Amazement, from the contrary Twichings of the Powers of both Worlds, each bidding for their Souls, stand looking about in the Plain, deliberating and wisely weighing Matters on both Sides, being as yet undetermined, whether it would be more agreeable to Reason to go forward with this odd little Flock of Fugitives, to seek a safe Retreat in *Zoar*, or even turn back again to the opulent City, full of good Company, Ease, and Entertainment.

These two Classes, which make so great a Figure for Numbers, in the School of *CHRIST*, shew plainly that *Lor's Wife* is quite forgotten of them; and that therefore a Call to Remembrance is no unwarranted or unwarrantable Thing. In my further discoursing upon it I purpose to say something.

I. In general, of the Use of the historical Part of Scripture, profitable for Instruction in Righteousness.

II. I shall point out the Particulars worthy our Attention in the memorable Piece of History here referr'd to. And then,

III. Call to Remembrance, that there must be a close and honest Application made, or no Benefit will follow from this or any other Judgment upon Record.

First, then, let us consider the useful Lesson of Instruction that is, in general, wrapt up in the historical Parts of Holy Scripture.

Now, it is not so much for Want of Knowledge, as the Want of having our Knowledge properly awakened and stirred up in us by way of Remembrance, at the critical Season when it should do its Work in delivering us from the Power of Temptation, that we reap so little Advantage from it. This Want is most effectually supplied by the History of former Times; wherein our particular Case, with all its Circumstances and Consequences, is set before us as in a Glass, depicted in the Lives and Conversations of those who have gone before us: So that the historical Part of the Bible, wherein we may safely depend upon our Facts as written under the Direction of the Spirit of Wisdom and Truth, is, as it were, the Storehouse and Treasury of a Christian's Memory; even as a heavenly Disposition, by Faith to apply, and do or forbear accordingly, is the very Life of his Spirit: And therefore it is we have received such especial Charge all along in the Scriptures, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest these Matters, that, in the Day of our Trial, we may have them ready at hand, whether wanted for Exhortation or Comfort.

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These Things being most profitable not only for Instruction in Righteousness, but for Reproof of all Unrighteousness, the Man of God is more especially called upon to meditate, to give himself wholly to them; and for this Reason, That, thus help'd, he may become perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good Works. Indeed all our valuable Wisdom and useful Knowledge stands either in the Experience of our own, or in the Memory of other People's Lives and Actions. And tho' our own Experience is most to be relied on, for the infallible Truth it carries along with it, yet as our Days are short, and the Part we act in Life but a small Portion of the vast Design we are engaged in, our own Experience will be found defective alone to guide us in many of the arduous Paths we have to tread. *Job* tells us, We are but of Yesterday, and our Experience can afford us but slender Security in many of the hard Cases, Straits and Difficulties, we have to encounter in our Passage thro' an unkind, and every way unfriendly World. To supply this Deficiency we must ask the former Ages what they did in such like Condition; search the Records of antient Times to match our present Difficulties, and to get a Pattern from thence to proceed by, without Hazard of fatal Miscarriage. *Solomon* tells us in his Day, *That what now is hath been already; and that there is no new Thing under the Sun.* So that it is but turning to our Bible when we are over-hard press'd, and finding out some Case from Antiquity that may sample our own, and from thence draw Conclusions what Course is to be followed and what avoided, according to the Success or Mischief that formerly attended such-like Behaviour: And this is the Use that has ever been made of Facts thus transmit-

show how good it is to be instructed; Z 2

ted; similar Causes ever producing similar Effects. Thus *David* reproves his Captains for coming too near the Wall, from *Abimelech's* Miscarriage from the like Conduct. And our Saviour, from *David's* eating the Shew Bread when in Want, defends his Disciples in like Distress: Shewing, at the same Time, that Necessity has no Law. Of such great Use to us is this Manner of applying to Scripture-History, as a Rule for our Conduct in hard and trying Circumstances; that we are so frequently called upon to make this Advantage of it.

Remember, saith Moses, the Days of old, ask the Fathers and they shall shew thee.—Remember the former Things, saith Isaiah.—Ask for the old Paths, where is the good Way, and walk therein, saith Jeremiah.—Inquire, I pray thee, of former Ages, and prepare thyself for the Search of their Fathers, saith Job.—Take the Prophets, who have spoken in the Name of the LORD, for an Example of suffering Affliction, and of Patience, saith St. James.—Call to Remembrance the former Days, saith St. Paul.—And Remember Lot's Wife, saith our Saviour here. Lay your Actions boldly to the Line of theirs, and from like Doings expect like Ends; seeing it is the same God over all, Yesterday, To-day, and for ever. This Reflection leads me to

My second Head, which was to point out the most useful Particularities in the Example here referred to by our blessed LORD,

It is observable that this is the only Story in the Old Testament he has, in so forcible a Manner, called out upon us to remember; from whence we may conclude that it contains something well worth our

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our remembering. The Point for which he here produces it, was to caution his Disciples against the dangerous Sin of Backsliding; the only one for which this monumental Judgment, this strange Pillar was erected. Avoid it then; or pass not by it without receiving Instruction! Let us then trace the Actions and Behaviour of this exemplary Sufferer, and see what brought on this fearful End. Both the Crime and Punishment are, in few Words, set down in the Book of *Genesis*: *She looked back, and became a Pillar of Salt.*

The Angel had thus given Charge to Lot and his little Company,—*Scape for thy Life; stay not in the Plain; look not back, lest thou perish!* She regarded none of these astonishing Threats, though poured into her Ear from the Mouth of an Angel, and accordingly perished instantaneously. Such light Account made in such perilous Circumstances, must have proceeded from an evil Heart of Unbelief, or Kind of wandering Distrust, as that she had left the favourite City without sufficient Reason, and that the Angel had terrified them with a Dread of what would never come to pass. The Sun rose that Day so clearly, and it was so fine a Morning, what Likelihood of such a Storm impending from so serene a Sky? These Suggestions began to make her repent of her too hasty Flight and ridiculous Credulity, the Issue of a superstitious and over-heated Imagination; and that her Sons-in-Law had the more sound Sense who never stirr'd for such an unheard-of Advertisement.

Faith failing, Inconstancy of Purpose, and Non-Perseverance of Action, regularly and immediately follow. She now begins to tire and hang behind:

The Eye naturally, under these Impressions, turns back, and hangs after the beloved but forsaken Place; and, though her Feet moved slowly from it, her Heart remained fixed upon the Spot. Had not our Saviour pointed to the Reason that produced this affectionate but fatal Glance, it must have remained a Secret till the Secrets of all Hearts shall be disclosed. But, in the Verse before, he directs us to the Knowledge of it, under the Caution of not being concern'd, on these direful Occasions, for any Stuff in the House left untaken away. Something of this Sort certainly troubled her. Besides, weary with continual sitting; sick of the Trouble of shifting from Place to Place; first from *Ur* to *Haran*; then to *Canaan*; thence to *Egypt*; thence to *Canaan* again; then to *Sodom*; and now to *Zoar*; and this too in her old Age, when she would fain be at Rest, and remain quietly in a convenient Settlement and fix'd Habitation: Thus to be alarm'd with strange Tales for ever, and to be hurried away with Fears of Danger without End, from the Comforts and Conveniences of a stately City, to seek Safety in desolate Mountains, all this appears a very wild Project, a very unhappy Circumstance.

Such Thoughts may be supposed to affect and trouble her, because they naturally rise in the Mind on such Occasions, and in such Dispositions: But, as wise and prudent as they may appear, they were nevertheless attended close with a most fearful Destruction. The Sin then, 'tis plain, was no other than that of a restless Soul and a wavering Mind, grown weary with waiting any longer for the Salvation of God. Eyes, failing with looking upward, turn of course downward to the Earth for Ease and Refreshment.

It is farther worth remarking, that this Faintness in walking with GOD, humbled under his various Dispensations, came on towards the End of a religious Life of Faith and Patience, and just at the Point when GOD was about to do his last Mercy to perfect the Soul for ever. *Winter Brooks will dry, saith Job. Summer Fruits will rot, saith Amos.—Morning Dew will soon pass away, saith Hosea.—And Corn that has not much Root soon withereth, and cometh to nothing, saith CHRIST.* Little better is here expected. *Pharaoh's* godly Fits and profane Returns, nine Times repeated, accompanied with as many Plagues and as many Deliverances, surprize us not. *Saul's* two Years Godliness, and *Judah's* three, may end as they did, without much Wonder; but the unhappy Victim before us had been thirty Years under religious and godly Discipline. That she should persist thus long, and at last so shamefully fall away, is Matter of great Grief, and calls to Mind *St. Paul's* earnest Caution, *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.*

But still farther: She not only continued faithful all these Years, but must have suffered many Things in the Cause of GOD. She had been the Companion of *Abraham* and *Lot* in all their Exile, Travels, and Afflictions; had escaped out of *Egypt*, untainted with their bewitching Superstitions; lived in *Sodom*, unstained with their crying Sins; escaped Murmurings at the Famine of *Canaan*; and took no Harm from the Fulness of the Cities of the Plain. Has she done and suffered all this in vain, if it be yet in vain? Has she for ever lost the Fruits of all this Labour in the LORD, and for so slight a Thing as only being worn out at last? It is sad, but very proper to be remembered,

bered, that thus it may be. Oh! these small Sins, as they are foolishly accounted, are the very Bane and Ruin of the Soul,

But to aggravate still farther the Circumstance of this mighty and sudden Destruction, and that for seemingly so small an Offence, it happened at the very Instant when an Act of God's special Favour was proffered to preserve Life, and crown all former good Works with final Acceptance.

It was a Mercy from God that she stood thus related to this Righteous Man; that she was incorporated into the Family, and made a Partaker of the Blessings of faithful *Abraham*; it was a Mercy to be delivered from the Errors of *Ur* of the *Chaldees*; a Mercy to be kept safe in *Egypt*, (the great Seminary of Superstition); a Mercy to be preserved from the crying Sins of *Sodom*; a Mercy to be delivered from the Captivity of the Five Kings; and this the last and greatest Mercy of all, that she was sought for to be rescued from the shocking Overthrow of these five Cities. All these are such Aggravations of what may appear at first View but as a Slip of human Infirmary, as swell the Crime to an enormous Size; as indeed God's stretching forth his Hands to save always does, if they prove a disobedient and gain-saying People, who coldly regard the Day of their Visitation. And thus the poor wrong-headed weak-hearted Object before us forsakes her own Mercy, when snatched like a Brand out of *Sodom's* Fire by a Kind of merciful Violence; seized by Force, and, as it were, dragg'd from Death and Ruin, her Hand laid hold upon for that very Purpose, fully warn'd too of the Danger of

a Moment's longer Stay in the devoted City; having Angels to go before, *Lot* for Company, Daughters to attend; and now, being arrived at the very Entrance of *Zoar*, the promised Haven of Rest and Security, this very Time, Place, and Presence did she make Choice of for the Scene of Destruction. Here she first begins to waver, on the very appointed Day of Salvation: Here Faith fails, when the Promises and all the better Things provided for the faithful Continuance in Well-doing were just going to be received. In this very Article, when the World was in a Manner done with, she looks affectionately back to the World, as if she repented of those religious Attachments that had deprived her of its Pleasures; and, for this single Act of Mind, perishes for ever in one common Ruin with *Sodom's* obstinate and daring Sinners, and that at the very Gate and Entrance of Heaven.

Oh! wretched Condition of all human Kind, never secure from falling whilst on this Side the Grave! But, in Truth, if the Creator's Presence be removed from the Creature, it must drop, in whatever Period of its Existence it shall be forsaken.

These Reflections lead me to

The *third* and *last* Thing I purposed to enlarge upon, which was to apply; and without which we shall be as she, and the whole History become no better than a marvellous Story, of a tragical and singular Event; a well-told Tale.

First, then, let it be here remember'd, that we have to thank God for this Example on Record; we have
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to bless CHRIST JESUS for thus pointing it out for our Instruction and Caution; and we have to beseech the Holy Spirit to graft it inwardly in our Hearts: That all those who having once put their Hand to the Plough look not back, lest they become like unto her; who here, for so doing, lost all former Labour in the Vineyard; and, after having borne the Burden and Heat of the Day, is cast out, at the eleventh Hour, without having received a Penny. For this Purpose was the Pillar erected; for this Purpose was it here pointed out.

Amongst the many Ways the Wisdom of God disposes of the Sins of Men, and even out of such Sort of Evil brings forth Good, this is one—That their Falls and their Follies are not suffered to be forgotten, but remain a standing Monument to future Generations, and Warning-pieces to all that shall hereafter live ungodly. As he embalmeth the Memory of the Just for our Imitation, so he hangs out, as it were, in Story, a Sample of every Sinner, and his Punishment, for our Caution: That thus the Righteous may, without Offence or Cruelty, wash their Footsteps in the Blood of the Ungodly; and the Ruin of the Wicked work Good into the Hearts of them that fear God. Hence then let us learn Perseverance, which is the only Virtue, after all our seeking and striving, that ever shall be crowned. Forgetting therefore those Things that are behind, let us press still forwards towards the Things that are before, never resting till we hit the Mark or wear the Crown.

Farther, let us learn not to stumble at the Fall of the Just, but beware. Out of the very chosen Twelve, one miscarried: Out of the only eight saved from
Noah's

Noah's Flood, one fell away; and out of Lot's little Company of four, one came short, though in the Presence, and under the Tuition of Angels: Nay, our Saviour reduces the Number to two, and tells us, though ploughing or grinding together, *the one shall be taken, and the other left*. Be not high-minded, but fear. These Thoughts will search our very Souls, if they have any Life or Sensibility towards God left in them. Here's one before us who miscarried, after long Continuance and great Suffering for the Truth's Sake; and that at the very Door of Hope, at the very Entrance into the Gate of Rest. Hence we see, all looking back upon a well-spent Life will avail nothing, if the Heart, at our very last Hour, be not right in the Sight of God; and that we have Reason to pray,—O thou that hast taught me from my Youth up 'till now, forsake me not in mine old Age, when I am grey-headed! Indeed it is but trifling to begin, except we continue; nor to continue, except we do so unto the End.

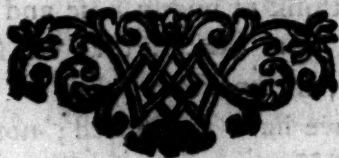
Let us remember also not to make light of any of God's Admonitions to forsake and go out from the wicked World; that we grow not weary in walking with him, in such Paths as his Providence shall chuse; that we never think of bodily Ease and Conveniency when the Soul is at Stake; that we slack not our Pace, nor loiter in the Plain; that we desire no Review of what we have renounced; not suffering the Eye to behold Vanity, nor the Tongue to inquire with *Peter, and what shall this Man do?* And, lastly, be sure, leave no kind Thought behind you, lest, by some unusual Visitation, you are taken off under the bad Impression of it. In all these Points Admonition here stands full before us.

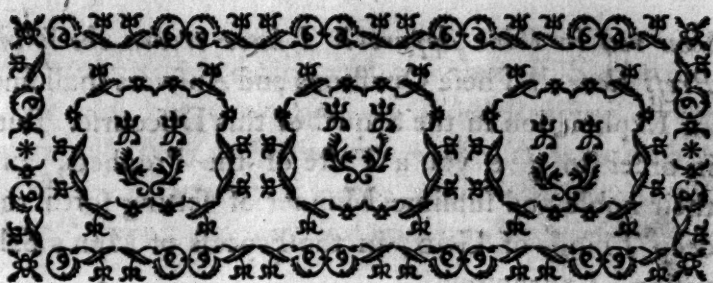
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Hold on therefore in the Ways of the LORD, all ye that have entered into his Paths; never letting it depart from your Memories, that the Mark of GOD in the Foreheads of those that escape the Wrath to come, is the first and last Letter of the Alphabet; and that the Crown is not laid up for them that did run well, but for those who have finished their Course with Joy.

And, O LORD GOD, who seest that we have nothing of our own to trust in, do thou mercifully grant us such Power as may defend us in all Dangers, and carry us through all Temptations, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

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SERMON XXVIII.

ISAIAH lxiii. I.

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed Garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his Apparel, travelling in the Greatness of his Strength? I that speak in Righteousness; mighty to save.

HAD Philip join'd himself to the Noble Ethiopian's Chariot, and found him reading this Passage out of the Prophet *Isaiah*, as he did that of the 53d Chapter, *He was led like a Sheep to the Slaughter*, and had had the same Question propounded to him, *Of whom speaketh the Prophet this?* He would have open'd his Mouth, and begun at the same Scripture to preach unto him the Resurrection of CHRIST, as he had done from the other of his Sufferings. The whole Passage is indeed a complete Dialogue between CHRIST, as risen in Glory, and the Prophet; wherein two very material Questions receive a full Answer; *Who is this? I that speak in Righteousness; mighty to save.* And wherefore art thou

thou red in thine Apparel? I have troden the Wine Press alone. These Questions and Answers shall find an Explanation in the Sequel of this Discourse. But, in order to give you a Taste of the Prophets, and their noble and sublime Manner of setting forth the deep Things of God, in the Process of Man's Salvation, I purpose

I. To fetch a Compass backwards, and explain what is meant by *Edom* and *Bozrah*. I shall then,

II. Answer the two Questions here proposed by the Prophet, *Who is this?* And *Wherefore art thou red in thine Apparel?* And then conclude all,

III. With these few Observations, by way of Application, That the Work of our Redemption, by the Death and Resurrection of the *Messiah*, has ever been look'd upon by all that have been let into the Secrets of Nature and the Counsels of the Almighty touching this Matter, as a most stupendous and amazing Work: That though it cannot be executed by any Powers lodged in ourselves, yet it must be done in us, and with our hearty Concurrence; and that thinking slightly of it, seems to be the main, if not the only, Hindrance of its saving Operation.

All this will appear necessary when we consider how poor an Opinion we are taught to entertain of these essential Doctrines of Christianity; and how
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the Familiarity and little Manner in which we are used to hear this sublime Matter treated, has bred in us a low and contemptuous Understanding of the whole Mystery of Salvation: As if it were an easy, a very easy, Matter to be saved; and to pass from Death unto Life, an ordinary and common Progress.

First, then, I am to explain what is here thus figur'd out to us by CHRIST's being seen thus coming from *Edom* and *Bozrah*.

Now, it is ever the Prophet's Manner to speak of future Events as if they were actually present before their Eyes; and this is the Reason why their Prophecies are call'd Visions. Thus *Isaiab* here speaks as really seeing one coming glorious in Apparel, and walking in Strength from *Edom*, and as victoriously escap'd out of *Bozrah*; which was the chief City, and Place of its greatest Strength. *Who will lead me, saith the Psalmist, into the strong City; who will bring me into Edom?*

But how can all this be? We hear of CHRIST, when a Child, in *Egypt*, but never of his being in *Edom* or *Bozrah*. This may be literally true; but we have the Testimony of JESUS, that he is the Spirit of this Prophecy. Let us but compare spiritual Things with spiritual, and we shall find no Offence with his never having been there in Person, any more than in his having seen *Abraham*, though not yet fifty Years old. What I am now going to observe will not only clear up this, but will serve likewise as a Key to several other similar Passages in the Scriptures of the Prophets, who have a Language and Form of Expression peculiar to themselves.

Nothing

Nothing then is more common with them than to speak to their own People in the peculiar Phrases and proverbial Dialect of their own Country: And it was the constant Custom of the *Jews* to set forth their ghostly Enemies, whether the mortal or immortal Adversaries of their Souls, under the Titles and Characters of those Nations and Countries that were sworn Enemies to the Commonwealth of *Israel*. Thus, *I will have War with Amaleck from Generation to Generation*, even after that People were outwardly no more; utterly destroyed; their very Name, as a Nation, blotted out from under Heaven: But, in their Sin, it was perpetuated; they had sought the Hurt of those whom God had humbled for Penitence; persecuted those whom he had wounded; and this was a Baseness of Temper the Almighty could never away with. And thus *Egypt*, where they were in Bondage, is never to be returned to again, as signifying the Slavery of the Soul, while held under the Dominion and Power of the beggarly Elements of the World; in the Plenty of which that Nation remarkably rioted. So likewise *Babylon*, where they were in Captivity, becomes proverbial; ever execrable in Scripture Account, as pointing at the Captivity of the Mind by the Pomp, Pride, and Idolatry of all outward and shewy Things, wherein that City greatly abounded. And, agreeably hereto, the Angel tells us, that there is a spiritual *Sodom* and *Egypt*, where our LORD was crucify'd. Now, it was from *Edom*, in this Sense, that the Prophet saw CHRIST returning in Triumph; as under this following Description of the Place and People, will be made still more plainly to appear. They were remarkable for being the wickedest People upon the Earth: *Malachi* calls *Edom* the Border of
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Wickedness ; a People with whom God was angry for ever. In which Points none so fitly express the Enemies of our Souls, against whom the Anger of the LORD is said to be perpetual ; *and the Smoke of whose Torments, saith St. John, ascend for ever* : So that if the Powers of Darkness may be express'd by any Place upon Earth, by none so aptly, by none so strongly, as by *Edom* and *Bozrah*.

The Inhabitants of these Places were the Descendants of the profane *Esau* ; *the same is Edom*. They were the nearest of Kin to the *Jews* of all People, as the Posterity of two Twin-Brothers ; and might have been, one would have thought, better Friends : But *Edom*, it seems, was of the elder Family ; and thence sprang the never-to-be-forgiven Enmity. The People of *Israel*, who were the Issue of *Jacob*, the younger Brother, had enlarged their Border, and had obtain'd a far better Inheritance than the *Edomites* : Hence arose Envy ; and no Hatred, Ill-will, or Cruelty has so strong and lasting a Foundation, or rises to that Height of bitter Malignancy, as that which is grounded upon Envy ; and accordingly they proved the fourest and most canker'd Adversaries that *Israel* ever had to contend withall. The Case is the same between us and the Evil Spirits : They were Angels, and the first created of the two Orders of intelligent Beings. Through the Redemption that is in *JESUS* we have obtained a better Inheritance than they ; and this is the Ground of their Rage against us. Thus the *Edomites* were ever ready to do God's People, their younger Brethren, all the Mischief they were able, both by themselves and others ; and when *Jerusalem* was taken, cry'd, *Down with it, down with it, even to the Ground !* And, when it was on the Ground,

insulted and rejoiced above Measure. *Remember the Children of Edom*, saith the *Psalmist*. This is the Height to which human Baseness can go; to cast off all Pity, to insult an Adversary when down, and to delight in Destruction for mere Mischief's Sake. And this was their constant Practice towards their younger Brethren, the Chosen of the LORD. None ever did *David* so much Hurt as *Doeg the Edomite*; none more malign'd CHRIST, the Son of *David*, than *Herod*, a Branch from the same Stock.

To *Bozrah* we need say only, that it was the very Centre and Strong-hold of this People, and, by way of Eminence, call'd the strong City; into which none could forcibly enter for the rugged Rocks that well nigh encompass'd it, and out of which none ever escaped whom they were disposed to detain: So that *Edom* well stands for the Kingdom of Darkness, and *Bozrah* for the chief Seat of its Princes Residence. And if CHRIST be seen coming out a Conqueror from both, then must we pronounce the Prophet here to have described well, and proved himself faithful in Vision. As *David* boasts to have cast his Shoe, that is, to have set his Foot upon *Edom*, and to be led into the strong City; so CHRIST, in very Deed, compleats the Saying; who swallows up Death, and all the Power of the Adversary, in Victory; and returns triumphant from the Grave, whose insatiable Throat, as a great Gulph, swallows up all besides. He looseth the Pains of Death; treads upon and bruises the Serpent's Head; bereaves Death of his Sting, and the Grave of its Victory: He takes the Hand-writing that was against us, the Roll written on all Sides with Law, Trespas, and Condemnation, and nails it to his Cross: He has spoiled all
their

their Principality and Power, and triumphs over them all in it: He comes in Glory out of *Edom* and *Bozrab*; out of Death and Hell, with the Keys of both at his Girdle; having conquered Death, and him that had the Power of it.

Let us now, as we purposed, in the *second Place*, get at the Questions asked on this Occasion, and enjoy the blessed Answers: *Who is this? And wherefore art thou red in thine Apparel? I that speak in Righteousness, mighty to save; I am he: I have trodden the Wine-Press alone, and therefore are my Garments stained.*

Now, it is observable that no Body knew CHRIST at his first rising from the Dead; neither *Mary Magdalen*, nor those that walked with him to *Emmaus*; no more doth the Prophet here. Indeed, who could have suspected to have seen in Glory a Man, just before rent and torn to Death; put into a Grave thus mangled, with a great Stone laid upon him; stripp'd too of his Garments, and Lots cast upon his Vesture whose it should be? Man, in his Hour and Power of Darkeness, had just done to him as he list'd; and well might the Prophet inquire *who is this glorious in his Apparel, and travelling in the Greatness of his Strength?* To this Inquiry he gives the Answer himself; not by Name, but by two such Marks as can belong to none but CHRIST; *I that speak in Righteousness; Truth itself, and in whose Mouth no Guile is found; and mighty to save*: Vain is the Help of Man, nor can any say this truly but JESUS the Saviour of the World. Righteous in speaking, mighty in saving; whose Word is Truth, and whose Work is Salvation. No surer Testimony than by Word and Deed.

Two things there are that undo Mankind, Error and Sin. From his speaking, who is the very Truth, and the Word that was in the Beginning with God, we receive Knowledge as a Cure for Error; from his saving Power, we receive Grace that through true Repentance, kills Sin in us, and delivers us from the Wrath to come. And it is worth our Notice, that his speaking is put down simply, without Addition; but his saving has Mightiness ascribed to it. Not mighty to destroy and tread down, but mighty to save: But his speaking and saving must never be severed, if we hope for the Righteousness of the one, or the Mightiness of the other. He saves none but those whom he teaches; and if we will but give him the Hearing, and learn of him the Righteousness he speaks in, we shall find the very Power and Might of Salvation is lodged in it; and that it will come forth accordingly, and do its blessed Work of Redemption in the Conversion of our Souls. So that the Question, *Who is this?* is fully answered; it is none other but CHRIST the LORD, returning out of great Tribulation in Triumph, having vanquish'd Sin and Death, by letting them do their worst upon him.

Let us now come to the other Question, concerning the Colour of his died Garments. *Wherefore art thou red in thine Apparel?* If so mighty to save, wherefore these Colours of Disaster upon thee, like one come fresh out from treading the Wine-Vat, stain'd all over? Blood indeed it was that was sprinkled on his Cloaths, and had thus discoloured them; but because the Prophet had named the Wine-Press, he shapes his Answer accordingly. He was himself trodden and press'd; he was, in his own Person, the Grape and the Clusters thereof; he was the true
Vine

Vine, and the blessed Fruits of it must needs be so trodden and pressed, to make them give out their hidden Virtues, and that good Wine which was to give Life and Spirit to the World, and become a Cup of Salvation to the Ends of the Earth. Thus, when he calls himself the Corn of Wheat; the Sickle, the Flail, the Mill-stone, the Oven, must all pass over him before he becomes the Shew Bread to God, or the Bread of Life to us.

But, to pursue the prophetic Simile now before us, that we may farther see the Reason why it behoved CHRIST to be thus entreated: The Foe of Mankind, according to the Scriptures, has his Wine, and his Cup; and *Adam's* sipping at it has intoxicated all his Posterity: It went down delightfully, but turned afterward in his Bowels to the very Gall of Asps; coagulating and turning all Nature into a mere Mass of Corruption.

Adam was by God planted a true Vine; but turning from the Truth, and taking hold of the Father of Lies for Support, he became a wild degenerate Plant, bringing forth Grapes of Gall, and Clusters of Bitterness, whereof came a deadly Wine; as the *Psalmist* has it, *In the Hand of the LORD there is a Cup, the Wine is red, it is full mix'd, he poureth out of the same, and all Sinners, who are the whole Race of Mankind, are to drink and suck it out.* And good Reason we drink of the Fruit of our own Inventions, our wicked Words and Works having brought it forth.

At length CHRIST comes in our Nature, and, though not an actual Sinner himself, yet in Love

to his Brethren, he chuses, for our Sake, to be found amongst us in Fashion as other Men, and would fare accordingly: Indeed, by his Good-will, he would at first have had this ugly Cup pass from him; but rather than we alone should drink and die for ever, he took it, and wrung out the very Dregs thereof: He resigned himself up to let the Evil do its worst upon him; and, by that entire Resignation, has open'd an Entrance, through Death, for all those that dare follow the Example of his Courage and Patience, into everlasting Life: As indeed we make our daily Acknowledgments—When thou hadst overcome the Sharpness of Death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers.

Since this gracious Act of his we are made to understand that Suffering joined with Faith and Repentance, is a Means of Salvation. By his drinking of this Cup of Wrath, he has so sanctify'd it to our Use, as to call it, *his Cup*, and pronounce a Blessing on all that dare drink, or be baptised with this his Baptism. He now reaches it out to all his Followers, as the only Restorative and sovereign Medicine for the Malady of Sin; nor is there any Way under Heaven whereby we can be saved from the Ruin of our highly-corrupted Nature, but the Way of the Cross. Thus he became the mighty Conqueror here represented, *glorious in his Apparel, travelling in the Greatness of his Strength*.

First, He is as a Lamb slain, dyed in his own Blood, and then becomes still red in his Apparel; but now dipp'd again in the Blood of the Adversaries of Mankind, as the Lion of the Tribe of Juda. All this great Work, whether in yeilding to Death, or in destroying

destroying Death by yeilding, he did in his own Might, that he might become the LORD of Quick and Dead. *He was alone in it ; of the People there were none with him :* His chosen Twelve forsook him, but yet he is not alone, his Father is with him ; but before all was finished, He hides his Face too ; as appears from his bitter Cry, *Why hast thou forsaken me ?* He looks round about him, but could see none that would offer to help him ; therefore his own Arm brings Salvation, and the Right Hand of his Power upheld him. The Angel indeed rolled away the Stone, but he was risen before ; and the Stone afterwards rolled away, rather that the Angel might enter his Sepulchre, than to give him a Deliverance from it. By his own Power he breaks forth out of Darkness into his marvellous Light, and rises in Triumph by himself, thro' Death, into the all-glorious Kingdom of Life Eternal.

I shall here take my Leave of the Prophet, and his just and sublime, but figurative, Manner of treating this great Myſtery of Godlineſs, that I may have Leiſure, in a few plain and humble Words, as I purpoſed in the

Third and laſt Place, to make theſe few Obſervations upon what has been ſaid, by way of Uſe and Application ; as, That the Work of our Redemption has ever been looked upon, by all who have been let into the Secrets of Nature and the Workings of God in it, as a moſt ſtupendous Work ; that though it cannot be executed by any Abilities of our own, yet it muſt be done in us, and with our full Conſent ; and that thinking ſlightly of it ſeems to be,

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if not the only, yet the main Hindrance of its Operation.

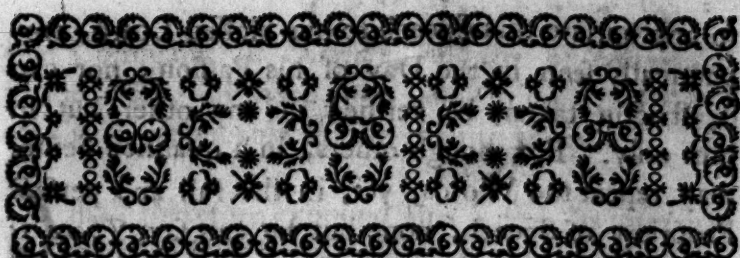
What has been already said may satisfy us of the wonderful Depth in which the Prophets conceived the Work of Redemption ; but I chuse rather to make my Appeal for this to every Man's Conscience.

Let any one then inspect only the present State of his Body and Soul, always in Hand for this very Purpose ; the one a mere Seminary of Disease and Corruption ; propp'd up with Art and Care from dropping into its Earth ; stay'd up for a few Years, just to serve the mean Office for a poor Animal to sin and die in. Next view the Soul, as fruitful a Seminary of Sin as the Body is of Disease ; its Thoughts, which are its highest Operations, evil, and only evil continually ; its Desires little more than to hang on to the Flesh and taste the Pleasures of Sensuality for a Season ; it's moral Goodness not much better than a Mixture of low Cunning and cowardly Deceit, pretending to be good, that it may be wicked with a better Face ; and crying up social Virtue, that it may, with Impunity, vex and waste the nearest Objects of its Envy and Hatred. Can we imagine now, that such a Body is to be glorified and made immortal without great Power ? Or that such a Soul should be made meet to dwell with Angels and Archangels, in Holiness and Harmony before GOD for ever, without some astonishing Change to be wrought upon it ? Let not this Consideration deter any one from entering into the Labour, for he shall find Power from above to bear him through ; *for Salvation is of the LORD* : But let no one grow lazy or negligent on this Account ; for though he do it not himself, yet it must be done
in

in him, and that with the hearty Concurrence of his Will, and with the full Desire of his Soul.

Whence arises this divine Savour? Whence originally spring the Love and Hope of heavenly Things? GOD alone, and his convincing Grace, must be trusted for the Answer. But till such a Desire be awakened, there seems no well-grounded Hope of Salvation. The Work will not go on without it. Slight Thoughts, weak Desires, and a Dejection of Appetite, damp the whole Proceeding. They repel the first Motions of Penitence and heart-renting Dispositions. Nature cannot bear the Cross, nor admit any Notion of the Sacrifice of itself; but the Foundation of the LORD still standeth sure: All that name CHRIST to purpose must depart from their iniquitous Selves; and, by a Death unto Sin, and a new Birth unto Righteousness, be made fit for the Resurrection of the Just.—And, now, GOD grant that these gentle Hints, by his special Grace preventing, may stir in our Minds such good Desires, as that we may at length overcome Death, and enter the open Gate of Everlasting Life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD; and to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

S E R-



SERMON XXIX.

LAMENTATIONS i. 12.

Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any Sorrow like unto my Sorrow, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the Day of his fierce Anger.

THIS is the Language of the deepest Distress the Heart of Man can experience; Extremity of Suffering, and none to regard it. In all our Afflictions, the Thought that nothing has happened to us but what is common to Man, gives a Bit of Comfort: But here Complaint is made of a Sorrow like no other Sorrow. Under our greatest Pressures it is some Alleviation to meet with friendly Notice, the Shew of Pity, some Sense of Fellow-felling, tho' it neither saves nor delivers; but the Afflicted here finds no such Touch of Humanity, but is treated as an Outcast, both of Heaven and Earth. Of whom then speaketh the Prophet this, or over whom is he here thus bitterly lamenting? Now, all agree not only to apply, but in a Manner
to

to appropriate this Speech to our blessed LORD, prophetically seen in the Day of his Passion; nor can it, strictly taken, be verified in any other but in him only. For though others, in a qualified Sense, may repeat the Words, yet, in the full and perfect Propriety of Speech, none but he can say, *There is no Sorrow like my Sorrow*: For notwithstanding the Prophet *Jeremiah* might here set it down on Occasion of his own People's being come to great Misery, and of the Holy City then newly laid waste and desolate by the *Chaldeans*; in like Manner as that Sentence,—*Out of Egypt have I called my Son*, was literally spoken of the same People; yet, in its full Significance, the Evangelist applies it to CHRIST the Saviour. *My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me*, was first uttered by *David*; but he, whom in Spirit *David* calleth LORD, taketh the Words, as it were, out of his Mouth, and gives them a more true and proper Signification, by passing them thro' his own.

The Ground and Reason of all which is a certain Divine Correspondence and Union, in which Time has no Concern, eternally subsisting between the Head and the Members; between CHRIST and the Patriarchs, Prophets, and all good People that were before his being thus manifest in the Flesh, whereby they become the Types of him and his Passion.—Thus were they all fore-running Figures of his Sufferings, who was the Root as well as Offspring of *David*; who was before *Abraham*; who was that *Lamb of GOD that was slain from the Foundation of the World*: He is the Head over all Things to the Church, which makes the offering up of *Isaac*, the selling of *Joseph*, the calling *Israel* out of *Egypt*; that

that Complaint of *David's*, and this of *Jeremiah's* in the Text, all more fitly, and in greater Fulness of Truth, applicable to him than to them.

I shall therefore expound this Verse, as properly belonging to CHRIST's Passion, as the Speech of the Son of GOD, made from the Cross; and as addressed to a Sort of careless People going up and down, without shewing any Kind of Regard either to him or his Sorrows, tho' they are the dear and precious Purchase of Redemption to all Mankind from Sin and Death Eternal. And in thus treating upon it, I shall observe the following Order,

I. To make a brief Representation of CHRIST's Passion, which was beyond any Comparison; *no Sorrow like his Sorrow.*

II. To inquire into the true Occasion of it, which is here attributed to the Wrath of GOD; *where-with the LORD hath afflicted me in the Day of his fierce Anger.* And then,

III. Call upon all Mankind to come to the Sight, and consider it deeply, as the only sure Ground of their Salvation: For, *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?*

First, then, let us cast our Eye up to the Sufferings of CHRIST, and we shall find them such as no Man ever went through but himself; This is what we are called upon to *behold and see.* Now, Sorrow is what Nature of itself inclines us to behold, as being ourselves in the Body and liable to be Sharers in it; and therefore every compassionate Eye is disposed to turn, as of itself, towards an Object of Distress.

Those

Those two in the Gospel that passed by the wounded Traveller in the Way, though they helped him not, yet they looked upon him as he lay : But he whom we are called upon to behold, is lift up to our Sight as the Serpent in the Wilderness ; and unless we purposely turn away our Faces, we can't chuse but behold him, and consider him too, which is the deeper Office of the Eye of the Mind. To inspect every Thing that is rare and strange, finds a Disposition even in natural Curiosity ; here then is presented before you something that has this Engagement in it, such Sorrow as none ever was like it.

To begin with the Pains of his Body : No whole Part left, wherein it was not smitten with Stripes and Wounds ; his Skin and Flesh rent with Whips and Scourges ; his Hands and Feet bored with Nails ; his Head pierced with Thorns ; and his Heart stabb'd through with the Point of a Spear ; all his Senses at once over-charged with whatever Torment Wit or Malice could invent ; his blessed Body was given as an Anvil to be beaten upon ; and they had so battered and defaced him with Abuse, that *Pilate*, touched with Pity to see a human Creature so foully used, brings him out to be viewed by his Persecutors, expecting that, upon beholding the Man made such a rueful Spectacle, already so evil entreated, so shamefully handled, the Sight would have moved the hardest Heart amongst them to relent, and cry, It is enough, we desire no more, he has been sufficiently chastised, release and let him go.

Consider next the Sufferings of his Soul, and to which bodily Pain bears but small Proportion.—

Give

Give me any Grief, saith the Wise Man, but the Grief of the Heart : The Spirit of Man will bear bodily Infirmities, but what shall support the wounded Spirit ?—*His Soul begins to be troubled*, saith St. John :—*To be in an Agony*, saith Luke :—*Exceeding sorrowful unto Death*, say Mark and Matthew. An Estimate whereof may be taken from his unheard-of Sweat in the Garden ; no Manner of Violence offered to his Body ; no Man near him ; in a sharp Night ; in the open Air, and lying upon the cold Earth ; to be all on a Sweat, and that of Blood, great Drops, and in such Abundance as to go thro' his Apparel, and fall down upon the Ground ; surely that Sorrow that could thus melt down his blessed Body, and so grossly distill his sacred Blood, must be of that fiery Nature that he complains was sent into his Bones, and made his Heart as the melting Wax. What his Feelings were in that Hour it is dangerous to define, seeing we understand not sufficiently to reach them. The antient Greek Liturgy has in it this moving Petition on the Occasion :—
 “ By thine unknown Sorrows and Sufferings felt by thee, but to us incomprehensible, have Mercy upon us and save us ! ”

To heighten our imperfect Sense of his unfathomably deep Distress, consider farther, that he finds none to comfort, or so much as to regard him. Scarce any of the most abject Creatures but meets with some kind Hand, some pitying Eye turned towards it ; but CHRIST scarcely met with this : What is left for the meanest of the Sons of Men, was denied to the Son of GOD in the Day of his Distress : Those he calls his own ; those among whom he had gone all his Life long, healing, and teaching, and feed-
 ing,

ing, doing Good to their Bodies and Souls, now cry, *Not this Man, but Barabbas; away with him; crucify him; his Blood be upon us and on our Children.* In the Midst of his Agonies they shake their Heads, saying, Ah, thou Wretch! And, at his most disconsolate Cry, *Eli, Eli,* deride him with, *Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.* Nay, of his very Disciples, his chosen Twelve, some bought and sold him; others denied and forswore him; and all fell away and forsook him: There is nothing forgot to make his Sufferings perfect. But what is more than all this, his Heavenly Father, who had never before left him alone, now hides his Face too; absents himself for a little Moment, that that Part of our Nature, which once wholly turned away from GOD, might be utterly destroyed by his now wholly turning away from it. This appears, in the strongest Light of Evidence, to be the Case: For upon that his most dreadful Cry, which at once moved all the Powers in Heaven and Earth, *My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me?* He presently adds, *It is finished;* he then bows his Head and gives up the Ghost! In which single Act all that was wrong in Nature finds its End. The Lamb of GOD has thus taken away the Sin of the World, and, thro' Death, destroyed him who had no other Power: All Offence and Trespas, all Hand-Writing of Ordinances that were against us, that were contrary to us, as condemning Sin to Death Eternal, are, by being nailed to the Cross, taken out of the Way, blotted out, expire, and vanish in this temporal Death of our great Representative.

For ever blessed then be the GOD and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who of his
tender

tender Mercy thus gives his dear Son to be a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction *for the Sins of the whole World.* And for ever blessed be our dear Redeemer, who abhorred not to take on him our vile Body, and thus willingly offer it up, as the only Remedy in Nature for its own Disorders: May a perpetual Memory of this his precious Death rest continually upon our Souls till his Coming again, to make all that are Partakers of his Cross, Partakers likewise of that Glory which was purchased by it. And now that we may bring ourselves under the sacred Influences of it, both with regard to the present Humiliation and the Exaltation that follows, let us, as I purposed in

The *Second Place*, seriously consider who and what it was that made all this painful Process necessary, which is here attributed to the Wrath of GOD. *Wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me,* saith the Text, *in the Day of his fierce Anger:* And unless the Cause be known and brought home to ourselves, we shall pay but poor regard to the Passion of CHRIST: For, however strange or uncommon, it is but an heavy and pensive Spectacle, and we care not to have our Eyes dwell long on so sad and melancholy a Subject. Now, upon the first starting this Question, Who was it that did, what was it that occasioned, all this? We shall be ready to return for Answer, The Powers of Darknes, wicked *Pilate*, bloody *Caiaphas*, the envious Priests, the barbarous Soldiers, and the enraged and blinded Populace; but this will not reach it: None of these could have had any Power at all against him, had it not been given to them merely as Instruments and Executioners. The Cause is GOD's. For tho' an Hour be said to belong to the

Power of Darkness, *this is your Hour*: Yet the Text tells us, *the Day was the LORD's*; it was the LORD that afflicted him *in the Day of his fierce Anger*.

Now, as this Wrath of GOD is apt to give us very unworthy Notions of the Deity; suggesting to us that the unchangeable Godhead is subject to like Passions with mortal Men; nay, to those that constitute the wretched State of the fallen Angels, (Wrath being the Essence as well as Punishment of the infernal Kingdom) it may not be amiss to stop here a while, and try whether this Stumbling-block may not be removed. *Wrath is not in me*, GOD says positively by the Prophet. By what Figure of Speech then may it be called his, as it is asserted to be in the plainest Terms in other Scriptures, as well as in this now before us; nay, it is mingled with our very Prayers? From thy Wrath good LORD deliver us.— If it be not in GOD, nor from GOD, whence then has it its Original? Who gave it Being? How came it up? Take it then thus: The Wrath is no where but in the Creature; and no where in the Creature but where it has turned itself away from GOD, who is pure Love. Before Creation there was no such Principle; nor after Creation was it manifested till a Fall from GOD produced it, both in Angels and in Men; so that all Wrath is the Issue of nothing but Disorder; begotten, conceived, brought forth, nourished, and inherited by none but those and the Kingdom wherein they dwell, who have broken themselves off from the sweet Love of their Original; and, in Truth, should signify no more than the Want of GOD, or that horrid State whereinto the Influence of the Almighty Goodness does not reach or penetrate. It is a mere Deficiency, or rather that

that sad Sense and Feeling that springs up in a Creature divided from some of its essential Properties, such as constitute the Harmony, and give the Relish to Existence : It is the Issue of a disappointed Hunger and Thirst after something the World has not to give ; it is the froward Child of that longing Desire that never can be truly quieted till a Portion of God, the Fountain of living Water, springs up in its Nature. And this is called the Wrath of God, by the very same Figure of Speech, as we, at this Day, call a most malignant scrophulous Disorder in the Blood, the King's Evil ; not because we are so absurd as to think it the King's ; but because nothing short of a Touch from his Hand has been held sufficient for its Cure. By the like Figure whereunto that Restlessness in Nature, which nothing can satisfy but the Grace of God which is in CHRIST JESUS, is called his Wrath : Whereas it is truly only that bitter Sense the Soul must have that is divided and separated from the Presence, and fallen from the Love, of its Creator ; which, nevertheless, presses to enter into every Thing that he has made, and, when admitted, sweetly reconciles every Thing to itself, and to the God that made it.

Now, to put an utter End to the Obstruction, and destroy out of Nature that Principle that separates from God, is the great Work of Redemption : God therefore, whilst this mediatorial Office was performing, totally withdraws his Presence from the Humanity of his Son on the Cross, because the Enmity that was found therein could no otherwise be slain.

This Matter so understood, we may now safely proceed in shewing who, and what it was that

made all these Sufferings necessary, and likewise what gives them their Efficacy. Nothing then causes, or rather creates, this Wrath, but Sin; which is a vain Struggle in the Creature to obtain Happiness, without the Help of GOD and a Portion of his Goodness. But what is all this to CHRIST who knew or embraced no Sin? What meaneth then all this fierce Anger against him? GOD forbid that he should do like *Annias* the High Priest, and command him to be smitten without a Cause.—*Shall not*, as saith *Abraham*, *the Judge of all the Earth do Right* to every one; especially to his beloved Son, in whom he proclaims himself from Heaven to be well pleased?

To preserve therefore a right Sense of GOD's Justice, CHRIST's Innocence, and our own Guilt, we must have Recourse to the Angel in the Prophet *Daniel*:—*The Messias shall be cut off, but not for himself.* He took on him the Person of the Guilty who had transgressed the Divine Law, and in whose Nature there is something that must of Necessity be destroyed before it can see Life, or escape the Wrath of a World to come. And, lest we should mistake in this important Point, the Prophet *Isaiab* tells it over seven Times in a Breath: *Surely he hath borne our Griefs, and carried our Sorrows; he was wounded for our Transgressions; bruised for our Iniquities; the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him; and with his Stripes we are healed; the LORD hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all:* All, even of those who pass by without regarding either him or his Sufferings.

We

We Sinners then are found the Principals in all these horrid Acts done to CHRIST on the Cross: It was in the hard Struggle to atone for Sin, and to cast out Sin from our Nature, that he sweats Blood, and cries out, *My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me!* All this Wrath was due to the Children of Wrath, who called to them, and forced it, as it were, into Existence, by a Departure from the living GOD.

And now being found in the Likeness of Man, by taking on him our Flesh, and standing in our Stead, he brings down the Judgment due to Sin upon his own Head, and it finds a Cure from that deadly Blow it received in his sacred Bosom. The Apostle therefore affirms, *That CHRIST must needs have suffered* as he did, seeing his gracious Design was to bring many, such Sons as we are, to Glory; and nothing short of it could make them meet for such Exaltation.

So then the Love of CHRIST is manifested towards us, in his having undertaken freely, and patiently gone thro', the most wretched State of the worst of Sinners, that the worst of Sinners might, through him, know how to be reconciled to GOD.

And the eternal and unalterable Love of the Father, towards us his poor lost Creatures, is herein likewise manifested, in that he has given his Son into our fallen Nature, thus to atone, and destroy, and kill Sin and Death out of it; and then rekindle what they had extinguished, that Light and Love which is the true Life of the Soul. Such then is the fierce Anger of the LORD, an Infinite of Love!

Such in the Midst of his Wrath, a Remembrance only of Mercy ! *And is all this nothing to you, O ye that pass by ?* Let us then, as I purposed in

The *Third* and *last* Place, consider seriously, and before the Wrath come upon us to the uttermost, whether these Sufferings of CHRIST are not the only sure Ground upon which we can build any Hope of escaping the Death, or obtaining the Life, of the World to come. Can we pass by and pay no Regard to either ? Stay but and consider what inestimable Benefit, to all the Race of *Adam*, grows out of this single Instance of Divine Love : For by his Stripes we are healed ; by his Afflictions our Corruptions are cured ; by his being forsaken of all, we are received to Grace, nay to Glory ! For not as the Offence, so is the free Gift. We are not only rid of the Wrath of GOD which arose from Sin, but also made, what we had otherwise no Right or Pretence to, Heirs of GOD, and eternal Inheritors of Blessedness in the Kingdom of his dear Son : For, by the Blood of his Cross, as by that of the true Paschal Lamb, the Destroyer not only passes over, and dares not enter our Doors, but also, by the Death of the High Priest, for he is both Priest and Sacrifice, we are restored from Exile to our former forfeited Estate in the Land of Promise, or rather to one far better. Sin deprives us of Paradise, a Place on Earth, but his Redeeming Grace gives Entrance and Possession in the Kingdom of Heaven : 'Tis call'd therefore *the Blood of the Testament*, as well as *Remission*, in that it bequeaths, and seals to our Use, all the rich Promises of the Gospel.

And

And can we pass by, and still take no Notice ! Surely, if we have but a single Spark of Goodness, or even Humanity, left in us, we shall disregard every Thing else, for the Sake of such blessed Expectations. And yet, observe, this is the chief, nay only Complaint of our dying Saviour : And therefore we shall do well in giving good Heed, lest at any Time, by a Neglect herein, we let slip at once all that materially concerns us. It was this, lest he should die unregarded, and so die in vain, that seems to move and affect him with deeper Concern than the bitterest Sorrows of his Passion : Under the sharpest Pangs of which he utters no Complaint, seeks to no one for Relief, asks no Deliverance ; but only moans to be passed by, and begs nothing but to be regarded. All Creatures in Heaven and Earth seem to have heard this mournful Address, but those to whom it was made. The Sun was ashamed, and the Moon confounded ; the Earth quaked, and the Rocks rent : But sinful Man, who occasioned all this Up-roar in Nature, can stand, it seems, unconcerned, and hear it all unmoved ; which proves what an astonishing Malignity against God is contained in Sin, and that an horrible Darkness has quite overwhelmed our sinful Nature !

In the mean while, God help poor miserable Sinners, for all other Help is departed ; nay, the very Sensibility of Danger is hidden from our Eyes ; otherwise, surely the very Manner and Strangeness of Salvation would call forth some Attention, tho' it secured not our best Respects : Regard it then but thus far as Matter of cold Speculation : The slightest Glance that's cast this Way-ward may catch the Eye of the Redeemer, in like Manner as once it did *Peter's*,
prick

prick our very Hearts with Sorrow and Contrition,
and send us away bitterly weeping !

Warm our Hearts; O blessed JESU, with some
such Earnest of thy Grace, as may shew that our
poor Regards are kindly accepted of thee ; and then
we may hope that, being thus at present bapti-
zed into thy Death, we may at length come to be
buried with thee, and so, through the Grave and
Gate of Death, pass to a joyful Resurrection, thro'
thy Merits, O blessed LORD JESU ; to whom, with
the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever be ascribed,
Ec. Amen.

24 OCT 62

SER-





SERMON XXX.

JOHN ii. 19.

JESUS answered and said unto them, Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up.

I Have been sometimes led to think that God, from whom nothing but Mercy and Goodness can come, has for this End, amongst others, suffered the deepest Secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven to come forth veil'd, as it were, under a Kind of sacred Obscurity, not only to preserve such Pearls from being trampled upon by such as the Gospel calls Swine, but to excite the industrious Mind of those whom Love makes diligent Seekers, to employ their Labours and spend their Time in so blessed a Business: So that, if the true Meaning escape them, they are sure to find Benefit in the Search. Indeed every Thing is made wonderfully fit for those that are fit for it: God is a gracious Master, and lets none go unrewarded that does but cast an Eye towards him; none shall ever say his Labour in the LORD has been in vain.

In

In an earnest Pursuit after difficult Truths, Men have been sometimes catch'd themselves in the true Gospel-Net; and tho' perhaps they miss the particular Thing they were in quest of, yet, in the industrious digging after it, have hit upon some unthought-of Treasure that has more amply supplied their Want, more than filled their Expectations. Thus the greatest Treasures of the Earth are hid in the deepest Mines, that they may be the more leisurely turned up for Use as they are wanted; and thus the more valuable Riches of the Kingdom of Heaven are delivered under the Mask of Parables, that they may receive a full Revelation, from Time to Time, in those who, by their Labour and Diligence, have qualified themselves to be the better for the Discovery. Nay, I do believe that even Infidels, who have studied hard to understand the Scripture, only that they might be the better able to batter the weak Defenders of it, have met accidentally with such Light of Conviction as has both convinced and converted them. If I can think too graciously of GOD's Dealings in this Particular, I am confident he will forgive me this Wrong. This Consideration, I own, whets my Desire always to get at a Truth that is wrapt up in obscure Terms, and about the Meaning of which Controversy hath risen, and injurious Explanations have followed. The Words now before us, on this Account, were most notoriously misunderstood and misconstrued, at their very first Utterance, by those who came to hear with no better Intent than to catch something out of the Mouth of CHRIST the Speaker, that they might accuse him; and finding they might with a little Alteration serve for their Purpose, they laid them by for Use at a proper Occasion; and some Years after framed

med a cruel Indictment upon them, as proving a Design in him to destroy their Temple. Nor do I think that many at this Day have a clear and worthy Apprehension of this Expression, when they hear it of course read in their Ears. Having therefore found, in the close Inspection of it, much Satisfaction to myself, I shall endeavour to make my Hearers Partakers of the same, whilst I place it in somewhat better a Light than the *Jews* did, and whose base Explanation is the loudest and most frequent Comment that we have upon it. And this I shall do by shewing,

I. That, by this Temple, the Body of CHRIST was aptly and properly to be understood.

II. That the Destroying of it was fully answered in his own Death. And,

III. That the Raising of it up again in three Days met with as full a Completion in his Resurrection from the Dead,

First, then, I am to shew that, by this Temple, our Saviour's own Body was aptly and properly to be understood, without any forced Interpretation, or straining the Metaphor.

Now, the Occasion of CHRIST's thus taking hold of this Figure of Speech, was his being at that Time in the Temple: For his Manner ever is to make what is before him serve to the Purpose of his Discourse; and as all Nature from the Foundation is his own, 'tis ever at his Beck, and readily answers his Design. They had been demanding a Sign from Heaven, and that too with regard to the Freedom he had

had just then taken in disturbing the profitable Market they kept in their Temple; and this is the Sign he gives,—That they should destroy this Temple, and that he would in three Days raise it up again. This put them beyond all Patience: Forty and six Years Work to be all pulled down, and set up again in three Days! Yet, taken in CHRIST's own Sense, for the Text tells us he spake it of the Temple of his Body, and it was a still far greater Work, and carries with it a much stronger Evidence of a Sign from Heaven: For their Temple, built by *Zorobabel* and *Herod*, would have been reparable had it been destroyed; but the Temple of the Body once down, though *Solomon* and all the Temple-Builders upon the Earth were to join in the Attempt, could never have been set up again. But amongst many other Things that might have led them, had they been so disposed, to the right Meaning of our Saviour whilst uttering these Words, was his Manner of Gesture in the Delivery; whether, at the pronouncing the Participle *this*, he carried his Hand, or cast his Eye, up to the Fabrick, or directed them towards his own Body; which one Circumstance would have settled the Point at once, and quitted our Saviour of the Charge of Equivocation. Let us then take it as *St. John*, who lay in his Bosom, says *he meant it*, and every Man has a Right to explain his own Meaning, and see whether it be not a Manner of Expression perfectly proper; which depends, as all such Forms of Expression do, upon the Similitude or Resemblance between them. What then is a Temple, or what makes it to be such? Is it not because it is the House of God? Or, as our Saviour had just before been defining of it, *Is it not called*, saith he, *an House of Prayer to all Nations?* And what indeed makes it his Father's House, but
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what makes every other Place an House, because he dwelt in it. 'Tis the Indwelling that makes any Place either House or Temple, and the Indweller denominates which, and whose it is. God therefore has his House or Temple with more Propriety in Flesh and Blood, than in a Building made with Hands; inasmuch as the Life that is in it makes it a more fit Residence for the God of Life, than any Edifice compounded, however magnificently, of dead Materials, Wood and Stone. And though we have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels only, yet these Vessels are made of animated Clay; which gives them Pre-eminence above all other Structures, though finished not only with Cedar and Marble, but though built up with Sapphire and Emeralds.

Now, if our Bodies be term'd Houses, because our Souls, as Tenants at Will, keep for a while their Abode in them, the Presence of the Supreme Lord of all, and who indeed fills Heaven and Earth, makes them, by the same Rule, his Temples. *Wherefore, saith the Apostle, know ye not that your Bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?* But they become more especially so, when employed in the Service of God; then they have all Things requisite to the Constitution of a true and living Temple. And if this be so in us, in whom God dwelleth by his Gifts and Graces, how much more properly in him, in whom all the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily? Indeed ours, so often defiled with Sin, so often shut up without any Service, through the Hurry and Disorder of our Lives, seems fitter to be resembled to the Tabernacle, carried about under a Cover of Goat Skins: But *Solomon's Temple*, in all its Glory, received

ceived still greater, in respect of its having been made a Type of the Body of CHRIST.

The antient *Jews* strove hard to make it appear that the Model of the whole World, Spheres, and Elements, were briefly comprized in their Temple: And the Christian Fathers, headed by St. *Paul* himself, bestowed much better Pains in shewing that itself, and all that was in it, was nothing else but a compendious Representation of CHRIST, from whom all consecrated Places receive their Sanction, and in whom they ultimately terminate. Some few Points of Congruity between CHRIST's Body and this Temple of the *Jews*, will serve to enlighten as well as enliven the Form of Speech CHRIST uses in the Text, and in the Defence of which we are now engaged.

Mark then the Rise and Fall of both: They had this Similitude in their Beginning; the first News of a Temple was at *Epbrata*, which is *Bethlehem*, the promised Seat of his Nativity; and they had a like Similitude in their End, inasmuch as both were cruelly destroyed and ruined by the wrathful Hands of mistaken Bigots: But there is still behind a more apt Resemblance, in their being rear'd up again. The first was destroyed by the *Chaldees*, down even to the Ground; and thus dealt the *Jews* with CHRIST's Body: They brought it down to the Earth; and, to secure it from ever rising again, sealed a Stone upon it. But as the Temple thus razed to the Earth was restored by *Zorobabel*, so was CHRIST raised up again from as complete a Ruin; and as the Glory of the second House was greater than the first, so the State he rose to was far more glorious than that he fell from.

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To heighten the Comparifon; look next into the Inſide of it; look into the Ark; there will ariſe no Offence for ſo doing: The two Tables in it well re- preſent the two Treafures of Wiſdom and Goodneſs hid in CHRIST; and which were firſt broken, then new hewn, and written over afreſh. The Pot of Manna was another perfect Reſemblance; the Urn that held it was made of Earth; and that Manna which would not keep ſweet more than two Days, being put into this Pot, came again to itſelf the third Day, and kept without putrifying ever after. Again: *Aaron's Rod*, quite dead and dry, yet revived, bloſ- ſomed, and brought forth ripe Almonds. All and every of theſe point at CHRIST and his Reſurrection, or muſt for ever reſt without a Meaning.

Again: Nothing more truly conſtitutes a Temple, than having propitiatory and expiatory Sacrifices for Sin offered up in it; and this was ſhadowed only in all others, and in him alone truly perform'd: For there entire Obedience burnt bright and clear thro' the whole Courſe of his Life; there the Trefpaſs- Offering of his Death and Paſſion, ſatisfactory for the Sins of the whole World, was compleatly made; there the Meat-Offering of his moſt precious Body and Blood was given as Food for the Life of the World; and there was that Peace-Offering finiſhed, by which all Things in Heaven and Earth are for ever recon- ciled to GOD. Lo, then, a Greater than the Temple was there; which was but, in Truth, a Sign of himſelf, and in that Reſpect claimed all its Honour.

Judge now, whether CHRIST, in calling his Body a Temple, did Language any Violence, or the Build- ing any Diſcredit; or whether he deſerved ſo baſe a Cen-
Cen-

Censure as they passed upon so innocent and apt an Allusion. But it is terrible to have Dealings with deep Malice, joined to a shallow Understanding; such ever miss a wise Man's Meaning for Want of Sense, and, from an Abundance of Ill-will, clap upon it a dull and mischievous one of their own. But to proceed to

My *second* Head, under which I am to shew, That as his Body, whilst living, was rightly called by him a Temple, so was the Destruction of it as fully answered in his own Death. This too is a Phrase of known Propriety, and need no more have been misunderstood, but to serve a barbarous Purpose, than the former. *The Time of my Dissolution is at hand*, saith St. Paul. For what is Death but the loosening of the Cement that for a while holds Soul and Body together; which two are, like Timber and Stone in a Building, knit and framed into a mutual Support for each other; till at length, tired with each other's Weight, they disjoin and drop asunder.

This is a true Picture of natural Death; but the Destruction here pointed at carries with it an Idea of Violence, and the Help of ruder Hands than those of Time and leisurely Decay. This Temple drops not down for Age or Weakness, but they pluck it down. They are therefore found false Witnesses against him, both in misrepresenting and adding to his Words; another sure and constant Practice of invidious Malice, to throw in a Word to make Mischief hang the better together. He never said, I will destroy either this or that Temple; but, *Ye will destroy this Temple, and I will raise it up*. Hear only what they witness against him: Two of them say, *This Fellow*, to give it Weight, *said I am able to destroy the Temple*
of

of GOD, and build it in three Days: So, others give it this Turn; *I will destroy this that is made with Hands, and within three Days I will build another made without Hands*; but neither so did their Witness agree together: I think not; nor with what he said neither. And yet, as if all had been proved, they cast it in his Teeth on the Cross, with an *Ab! Thou that destroyest the Temple!* No, they were to be the Destroyers; and to the *Pharisees*, as their proper Work, these Words of CHRIST are directed, and they fulfilled them to a Tittle: For as hot and holy as they seemed, how broad soever their Phylacteries, or long their Prayers, they honoured the Gold of the Temple more than it; and, when the Loss of that was at Stake, cared little for the other. These are the Persons to whom this Office is committed; and he delivers it out in the Imperative Mood; *Destroy ye*; in like Manner as he elsewhere bids *Fill ye up the Measure of your Fathers*; as knowing their Enmity against all Righteousness, but what the Apostle calls *their own*, was molten in them; and that they would execute to the Height all this, so as to become the ready Murderers of the Son of GOD. He speaks it, I say, not of Command, but as a Reproof of the keenest Kind; just as he bid *Judas—That thou dost, do quickly*: For as alert as they may be at pulling down, he is as ready at setting up again; and that of a far more glorious Building in lieu of it. But in their horrid Zeal they seem to go further than any Shew of Commission; they rudely rent and tare it down. They furiously haul and batter this Temple of his Body, 'till Flesh and Spirit were wrench'd and rack'd asunder: They sever'd the Flesh from the Blood; brake thro' the Roof (his Head) with Thorns; loosened the Foundation (his Feet) with Nails, as

with Wedges; forced Holes through the Side-ishes (his Hands) with Hammers; his Body (together with his Heart, the Holy of Holies, in the Midst of it) they demolish'd with an Instrument of Iron, with the Head of a Spear. Indeed they so rudely rive and rend him, as striving to spoil the Materials as well as ruin the Edifice, that it might, upon the whole, be term'd a finished Destruction, rather than a mild Dissolution. But we have still farther Witnesses to call for the Proof of the Propriety of the Expression, and exact Similitude and Harmony between the Dissolution of CHRIST's Body and that of a Temple.

At the very Instant the Veil of his Flesh was rent from off his Soul, the Veil of the material Temple, to accompany the Fate of its Principal, whom it thus represented in all Things, was rent in twain from the Top to the Bottom: Nay, as if the great Temple of Heaven and Earth bore a sympathetick Feeling hereof, all Nature trembles from the very Foundation. The Sun withdraws, as not caring to behold, and spreads Darkness at Noon-day over all the Land; the Earth quaked; the Rocks rent; the Graves opened, as feeling the Approach and Shock of an universal Dissolution, no less than that of the whole Frame of Nature. Surely all this was sufficient to answer their Demand of a Sign from Heaven, and that in the Shape of a Dissolution; which was all CHRIST foretold in the Text.

I cannot stay to aggravate, as it deserves, the obdurate Manner in which they stood all this. Surely a false Religious Zeal has a Degree of Stubbornness in it that finds nothing in Nature to which it may be compared; and must stand unshaken by any Force that

that can come against it, in the hard Heart of those who unhappily entertain the steady Demon! To proceed then

To our *third* Particular; where we are to shew, That the raising it up in three Days met with a full Completion in CHRIST's Resurrection from the Dead. *Ye shall destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up*, is spoken with Triumph. Ruin is your Work; go to; dissolve; destroy; down with it; do your worst; my Power shall triumph over your Malice: I will raise all up again, bettered for having passed under your battering and destructive Hand. The gentle Word he here makes use of to express this great Work, is worthy our Notice; it signifies an awakening from Sleep, agreeable to the Apostle's Expression, *That CHRIST should become the first Fruits of them that slept*; and all that sleep in the Dust shall, in their Day, follow after. They thought him utterly destroyed, and, to do them Justice, they omitted nothing to make him so; but they were deceived. They only made him fit for a Night or two's Rest in the Grave; and then Death, who had swallowed what it could not digest, like *Jonah's* Whale, on the third Day casts him up again. And this wonderful Work is represented as done by him with the same Ease as a Man is awakened out of Sleep; which fully proves the Divinity of his Nature, and that he was the first that was raised from the Dead by Virtue inherent in himself: For though several before were raised, by Power imparted for that Purpose to some Prophet from God, yet none ever raised himself but CHRIST, who had Life in himself; and which he could lay down at Pleasure, and in like Manner take it again: And it was the self-same Temple of his

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Body,

Body, which they had so mangled and abused, that he brought into Life again.

They did not destroy one, and he raise up another; but it was the very same in Substance, though not in Quality; and indeed, if it were not some-how mended, both the Destruction and Rebuilding had been only so much Labour lost. But it is far otherwise; the Glory of the second House excels that of the first; for, as the Apostle speaks,—*What is thus sown in Mortality, Weakness, and Dishonour, is raised in Immortality, Power, and Glory.*

Indeed the whole Reason for dissolving this Building was on account of some radical Blemish, some foundational Disorder that had happened to it, and which was not to be repaired without being thus wholly taken down and rebuilt; and that of more durable Materials, and after a more perfect Model. *This Corruptible must put on Incorruption; and this Mortal must put on Immortality:* And all this was to be perfected within the Compass of three Days.

These are the only Words in the Text that are not metaphorical, and their Plainness puzzled them more than all the rest. They were sure, as they had often been when mistaken, that he took too little Time for such slow Work as Temple-building: And this might have led them to a better Sense of the whole Matter; for, when applied to the Temple of his Body, to this Kind of Transaction Time makes no Objection, admit the Power and forty-six Moments afford as good Leisure to execute it in as forty-six Years. And indeed this Time seems thus limited only to give the greater Assurance of his Death; and to answer precisely

cisely the Sign, the only one he says he will then give, of *Jonah* the Prophet. And he came within his Time; for early on this, the third Day, according to his most true Promise, he rose, and, in that single Act, set all their Destructions to Rights again.

Having now ascertained this Temple in the Text to be CHRIST's Body; brought it down to the Ground in his Person; and set it up again in its Place, by his most glorious Resurrection from the Dead; let us now in a few Words, and for a finishing Stroke to the whole, conclude all with applying every Thing that has been said and done, to ourselves. GOD wants no Temples nor Temple-Service, nor is he worshipp'd with Men's Hands, as though he needed something that we could give him. All these Marvels were executed purely for us Men, and for our Salvation; this great Price was paid for our Ransom; wherefore glorify GOD in your Body and in your Spirit. This is the Day for dedicating a new and living Temple to the LORD; and every Member of CHRIST's Body is considered, in Scripture, as a lively Stone in this spiritual House: Is not this Matter of great Joy unto all People? But then all the Cords of Iniquity; the Bonds of Sin; the Chains of Darknes, must be dissolved, broken, and pluck'd asunder, before we can be gathered, knit, and set together again in the Heavenly Order. Die, be dead indeed, to Sin, and after two Days he will revive us, and we shall live in his Sight. *Hosea*.—But indeed these earthly Tabernacles, our vile Bodies, must be taken down and cleansed; must be templefied, if I may so say, before we go hence; for if it fall no Temple it will rise none. If we make them Brothel-Houses, Seats of Luxury, or Gain; if this be the Fruit of our Lives to become
Shrines

for Pride, or more sordid Barns where we be-
 low Treasure for the Selly, I see not how we can
 expect hereafter to be made Pillars in the Temple of
 God, or indeed serve to any Purpose in that Holy
 Place. We must then down with *Bethaven*, the
 House of Vanity, and set up in our Hearts *Bethel*, or
 that House of God which, by Grace, he erects in the
 Souls of Men; and then, when this Temple, by his
 Appointment, falls to the Earth, he of his Mercy
 and Goodness will, through the Spirit, raise it up for
 an Habitation for himself to all Eternity. And, O
 gracious God, who by thy special Grace dost put
 these good Desires into our Hearts, do thou, by thy
 continual Help, bring the same to good Effect, thro'
 Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with thee and
 the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, &c. *Amen.*

24 OCT 62

The END of the FIRST VOLUME.

